SERMONS

ON THE

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS

FOR 1904

MONDAY CLUB

TWENTY-NINTH SERIES

Rev. Leon F. Loofbourow.

In remembrance of his
short but pleasant pastorate
of Winthrop Church.

From Henry Lyman, a
member of the Church.

Charlestown, June, 1906.

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SERMONS

FIRST QUARTER

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS

LUKE 2: 40-52

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."

I. *The boyhood of Jesus shows a sound stock in the start.* At twelve years of age the lad was vigorous, natural and wholesome. A large part of this healthy condition was due to inheritance. There had not been time to cultivate strength by special exercises, and the family were not circumstanced in such a way as to demand peculiar rigors. They lived in a village, and the calling of the father could not demand a roving, rugged life. There were the self-denials and hardships of a narrow lot, the discipline required by meager means and honorable living, but there was no attempt at Spartan exposure to develop the child. Jesus was well born in the sense of having the priceless equipment of health, sanity and a tender heart. How one who has reached beyond middle life and been comparatively free from pain, able to do full work and enjoy sleep, this world, and the future outlook, blesses the mother who gave him a good body! The visions and broodings of the devout Mary had not made her offspring a fiery, nervous wreck. It is not the communion with heaven and meditation on divine things which has wrought a race of

weaklings. It is rather the unnatural earth fever which has worked ruin in the children of this generation. The mothers who have treasured the promises of God and dedicated their infants to his service, have enriched the lives of their young and had a stalwart stock.

The doctor, Luke, certifies the child as sound and growing at the critical period of a boy's life. We do not know the height of Jesus, but we can infer he was not undersized in any part. He grew in stature. We can tell what his habits were, then, if he were advancing in body, mind and heart, at that stage of his record. He was not crippling his nervous energy and squandering his life capital by cigarettes or secret vices. The neighbors round about commended his conduct, as a helpful, right-minded boy. Mothers saw with thankfulness his obedience at home, and wished their own lads would do likewise. The little camel driver who lived next to him in Nazareth made his own mother sad as he returned with the caravan from Damascus and repeated the hardy oaths of the men. The son of the blacksmith who made horn-handled knives in the principal street of the village had traded his father's handiwork for an Egyptian charm and pained his worthy parents. But there was at least one lad in the town who kept apart from falsehood and foreign follies. However quiet the circle of the boy's life it was evident that he grew. Men could see from year to year that at least there was progress in one member of their fossilized community. But beyond the growth of body and mind we observe what is said of the grace and favor of God as manifest in this young person. Men remarked of one of their number, of one of the youngest of their village inhabitants, that the grace of God was upon him. It is evident this was not manifested by extraordinary acts of speech, for these are not marked nor specified above his bodily and mental advancement. It must have been in the ordinary conduct of life, in his

symmetrical unfolding that the people testified as to his character. He was well known by neighbors and comrades. When he returned to Nazareth where he was brought up there were multitudes who could remember him. It was by the grace of God that he made himself known as a lad. His eyes were clear and mild, but not markedly so above those of other boys. He must have won his way by his willingness and kindness. This would bring him into favor with the aged as well as the young, the weak as well as the workers. You will find often in a whole village in our own land that the youth have become idlers and it is difficult for a farmer or tradesman or smith to get a trusty, courteous boy to assist him. It may have been so in Nazareth, and people were glad when they could get the carpenter's son to help at their chores, their forge or their harvesting. Probably Jesus was the village helper.

The wholesomeness and naturalness of the boy's life at this period are significant when we recall his advent and origin and after career. It is Luke who records his unique birth and it is the same writer who gives us this story of his boyhood and youth; doctor Luke who saw no conflict between the miraculous birth and the rational childhood. There are no signs in the latter of the departure from the ordinary paths of youthful progress. There are no portents, no fables, no hallucinations. This sane picture of Jesus at twelve years of age from the hands of Luke is an added seal of the truths of the gospel story of the divine conception. There is no making out a case; no thread of the marvelous shows itself at this period in the life of Jesus or at any time till he went forth on his public mission. As confirmation of the Saviour's wondrous birth this statement of his appearance and character at twelve is of far-reaching value. The divine nature was there but it was in eclipse till the fitting time for its manifestation. If the

account of the wondrous advent had been manufactured there would have been some marvels recorded of the childhood to carry out the fiction.

But the grace of God was in the boy and this is the gift which belongs to every child. It ought to go with a sound body and a sane mind. It is part of our normal inheritance. Jesus from his heredity, training and choice enjoyed this boon which parents should see is the portion of each of their little ones as they start in the long journey of life.

II. *There was a close time in the career of Jesus.*

There was the marvelous birth, but after that there were years of natural development. Only once is there a break in the silence of thirty years, which gives a chance for the biographer, and that is the visit to Jerusalem. After this the closure is even more emphatic, for we are distinctly told that he went with his parents to Nazareth and was subject unto them. On both sides of the divide we meet similar conditions of a normal and yet secluded career.

All our states have laws which prohibit the hunting of game save at certain times specified and by given methods. The greater part of the year is close time for shooting most kinds of animals and birds. The wild beasts which are to be followed for sport need opportunity to increase and grow, and if left to the whim of individuals would be exterminated. As there are prohibitions to prevent the extinction of the young animals, so there needs to be a close time on character, when we do not allow ourselves to indulge in things which excite our nerves and draw our strength from our bodies and minds. We check our reading, and are careful of sleep and food and exercise. There are things not in themselves evil which may be harmful to us. If we are wise we will in early days have a closure on these various indulgences. This is a commendable course also for older people as to the matter of temperance and associations.

In children it is peculiarly important that there be this insulation that they may have a chance to get a right start before they have to bear the burdens of life. God would have us give childhood an opportunity to develop before we crowd it with artificial cares. Many things which may seem pleasurable to us ought to be shut out because it is a dedicated season with the young for study, for cementing our friendships with Christ, for growing sound bodies and clean minds.

The parents of Jesus and the providence of God provided this storing time of strength and wisdom and grace. When we think of what the strain of the later life was we can see that this period of preparation was not too great. It was a scant proportion for three such years as were spent in public service. Then the great career at the last must not be imperiled by any chance or poor conditions of early mistakes. One who was the steward of the mysteries of God had to be found faithful, in exact fulfilment of momentous responsibilities laid upon him at an awful crisis.

Jesus lived a natural life in his early days but his latter years were full of tremendous completions. A betrayal, a trial, a crucifixion, and even a resurrection would exhaust the ordinary storehouses of a long lifetime.

In these days we shall be more and more thankful for those who have insisted on a lenten period in our course. There are big things which will require all our nerve and courage to conquer and carry. The competitions and questions which confront us as citizens, toilers, Christians, are stupendous. Happy is he whose parents and counselors have declared a close time on character. God has specially arranged for this in the Sabbath rests also. Few who disregard the sanctions of this sacred time realize its significance for children in being kept apart from the fever of the week-day. The nerves and minds of youth need,

even more than the elders, this Sunday seclusion from the world, though the hours may still be filled with joyful occupations. In mercy God declares a close time for men to prevent their being the slaves of the age and of the market, and we do well to be thankful to fathers on earth and the Father in heaven for their sheltering provisions, and not complain of the staidness of our early bringing up, or of hallowed hours and associations.

III. *The boy Jesus was permanently entered in the Father's house and service.*

The single early outlook we have upon this sacred life finds him in the temple of God. He was growing naturally, and he was obedient to his parents afterward, but there was a definite period when he connected himself as far as possible with the church of his fathers. He attended its services, he learned and taught, and he began to be about his Father's business.

However gracefully one is growing in this world there is no break or marring in a closer communion with God, or in associating ourselves definitely with organized religion and distinctly Christian duties. It is a culmination of our development, a fitting flowering out of the soul, a reinforcement of its powers, to ally ourselves with Him who has promised, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. There is often needed just this push and stimulus to ambition and motive in the life of the young which come from confession and fellowship with God. Men of good parts have been permanently stunted in their manhood and career in vast numbers, simply because they failed to allow and follow this divine awakening in their early years at a critical time. The young often seem to exhaust their original stock of life energies, and need something like a second wind to enable them to go

on to the heights of privilege. Parents have made the grave mistake of letting children choose their church and creed, instead of giving them first a fundamental foundation of the knowledge of God which is the beginning of wisdom.

The yearnings of children at certain periods of life will turn toward heavenly things, and it only needs a little help for them to classify themselves as the friends of Christ. Jesus' mind had been on the temple in far-away Nazareth, and he used his first chance of freedom to enter and share its hallowed privileges.

The age when the young should join the church ought to depend on the home training and evidence of the grace of God, but the part of the children in the fellowship, service and instruction of the church is forever set at rest by even the Old Testament record and especially and finally by the example of Jesus when only a wholesome, gracious boy of twelve.

Dr. Edward Everett Hale has stated that at the age of twelve his father ordered him to write an article for a newspaper, and that since that time no month has passed without some communication from him to the press. A boy does not need to be a prodigy to begin his Master's work at that age. No child but at this period is old enough to make and receive the sign of Christian confirmation.

IV. *The boy Jesus attended a home school.*

Of the school of Jesus we know this, that he learned much at his mother's knee. Had she not treasured angel sayings in her soul and would these not be a charter to guide her in moulding the career of her offspring? There were the great songs she had heard or uttered, the Christmas carol, the Nunc Dimittis of the aged Zachariah and the Magnificat of her heart choir. There would be the greetings of shepherds and wise men and the ancient saint, Anna. As Mary brooded over these memories she would

think with fresh intent of the words of the prophets and bring forth treasures new and old for the instruction of her Son. Was it strange that the boy was wise if he had heard of the angels who had come to his parents in their wanderings? There were many heralds who had visited their home from heaven. Joseph had seen one in his dream before his meeting with Mary. A friendly messenger had warned him when to depart to and when to return from Egypt. Both parents had these heavenly visitors, and their words, with those of the prophets, would be the food from which would be distilled the wisdom for the child. The Scripture, the words of angels, and his mother's memory and heart were the school-books of Jesus.

V. *The boy Jesus served an apprenticeship in life.*

Jesus was not only classified in the church, but he had a definite relation to the business life of the community. He would not have been an obedient son to his parents, nor have grown in favor with the elders of the neighborhood if he had been known as an idler.

In his trade which he learned from his father there must have been a degree of excellence which would commend him to the village folk as a good workman. When he mended cradles for the mothers they would not break out again quickly in the same spot, and he would pick good timber to make the flail or the oar.

The calling of Jesus was such as is an honorable one after two thousand years, that of carpenter. There are employments in which men engage in our age on which the curse of God now rests and which men will abhor in less than a hundred years. There are methods of getting money, of pandering to evil, of tempting one's fellows, which the fortieth century will execrate. But Jesus worked in a clean, useful industry and as the world overlooks his trade they do not have to apologize for his humble handiwork.

The questions of life and capital had not assumed the acute importance which they possess for us, but there were practical issues even then in one's business. There were the faithful, industrious finishing men, of whom Jesus was one, the kindly and hopeful, and there were those who toiled sullenly and fitfully. To one class work was a joy, as to Jesus; to another, a hindrance to pleasure. The root ideas of justice and fairness which must prevail in all the great controversies of men can be illustrated in the narrow circle of village life.

Jesus served an apprenticeship to life and labor, so that in his teachings of righteousness and carefulness in every one's calling he is not speaking from a doctrinaire standpoint. He had lived among his fellows so that he commended himself to them and to God. This common life experience is significant as recorded by Luke when we recall again the wondrous birth. In the mind of the apostle the two were not inconsistent, and the career of obedience and industry in daily service without marvels sustains the record of the heavenly advent, and stamps as genuine the earlier experience. The perfect human development supplements the evidence of the divine origin.

This is the new year lesson. How rich in precept and example for the child on the threshold Sabbath! There is the picture of the privilege of the grace of God for the young as they gather in the church to-day, of the pledge of his help for daily duties and growth in favor with mankind and heaven. We see how a boy can prepare to bless the world by heeding his home training and helping out the consecration of his parents.

William Rogers Campbell.

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

MATT. 3: 1-12

"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—Matt. 3: 2.

It is a remark of Mr. Beecher in his Life of Jesus that it is in accord with the genius of Hebrew life and history that Christ should be introduced to his work by a prophet; for the prophet was the free and inspired man in Israel, coming from the ranks of the people, with no call but that of God in his soul, and ordained by no priestly hands, whose message was not so much a prophecy of the future as the forth-telling of God's will in times of national crisis and collapse.

Such a prophet was John the Baptist, an Old Testament character upon the threshold of a New Testament time, who has the great office and honor of forerunner and herald to the Son of God. A Bedouin of the desert, unshorn and dark-burned by the sun, a man of fasts and vigils, clad in a rough garment of camel's hair and living upon the dried locusts and honey of the hills. John, like many others in an age corrupt and hollow-hearted, had been drawn to the caves and solitudes of Petra, where the sense of his mission, the spirit of popular unrest and the Messianic expectation had kindled like a fire within him, until at length the shrill and burning cry of his message was heard at the fords of the Jordan.

It is not strange that Judæa was stirred with a deep religious excitement and that men gathered from the city and country to hear what this new prophet should say,

for it had been four hundred years since a prophet had arisen in Israel. And here was one, like the lion-hearted Elijah, whose message was personal and clear; "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" His coming had all the suddenness and boldness of the Tishbite. His words were stern and challenged the sins of the times—the sins of extortion, of violence and of servility. A scathing contempt was in the man for all forms of hypocrisy, and when the official deputation from Jerusalem appeared with their official questions, he greeted them as a "generation of vipers."

No wonder the popular conscience was touched, that publican and soldier and priest alike felt the sharp edge of his warning rebukes and became penitent, while the common people waited in anxious suspense for the coming of the mysterious Messiah, who already was standing among them. It is not ours to tell the story of the baptism but rather to ponder the great message and the noble and notable personality of the man who brought it.

The message was a double one—a call to repentance and also the proclamation of a kingdom—whose great imperative was a pure heart and a clean life, *while the personality of the messenger* represented the spirit of an ancient time and covenant, whose law and prophets had been the heritage and glory of the Hebrew people, *plus* the spirit of a new and coming kingdom, whose ideals were spiritual and whose triumphs were in the future.

Preaching has been defined by a great preacher of our time to be the communication of truth from man to men, and thus the truth, which is an eternal and timeless thing, abstract and vague, becomes real and winsome through the warm and human medium of a living soul. The one carries the authority of God while the other gives it currency and appeal to the hearts of men. Only as the two are

fused together, the abiding truth and the persuasive personality, is successful preaching possible in any age. Each must fail without the other. The highest and holiest truth must ever come, as it always has come, *through* the hearts and minds and lives of men. So the Father sends his Son and so the Son sends out his disciples into the world to make real the good news of the gospel.

And the power of the pulpit in all the Christian centuries has depended upon the just balance of these two allied forces. Let the preaching of an age become one-sided by making the truth an abstract philosophy or a mere theology, thus removing it from the active sympathies and lives of men, and it falls upon dull ears and unresponsive wills. Or on the other hand, let the powers of a persuasive personality, however gifted, be put forth unanchored to the timeless truths of religion, and it fails to win or long to hold the hearts of men. For only as the human message carries the content of a divine authority, does it come to its sovereignty of appeal to the soul. And only as the divine truths receive interpretation through finite experiences, do they come to their real service in the world. Thus the message becomes the great credential of the messenger, as when the shepherd of Sinai received his commission to the court of the Pharaohs from the burning bush of Horeb: "And God said unto Moses . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me." And also the messenger becomes the medium of the message, as a window transmits the light of the morning, as when the tribes stood in terror before the thunderous and flaming mountain of the Lord, saying to Moses: "Speak *thou* with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

Here we are touching the philosophy and the springs of power in all successful preaching,—the secret of that "accent of conviction" upon the lips of prophet and of

preacher, whereby men are moved to faith and penitence as "seeing him who is invisible."

This was the secret of the popularity and the power of the Baptist. His was a message from the Highest, and it was spoken with the accent of a great conviction. And there beside the Jordan, as ever since, the common people recognized the voice of the prophet and answered his call to repentance. As Phillips Brooks says in his Yale Lectures on Preaching, this is the double consciousness of every preacher—that he is a messenger and also a witness. In the one, "he has all the authority and independence of assured truth;" and in the other, "the convincingness of personal belief" and experience. In the ideal of the *messenger*, he is kept from "wanton and wild speculations and the mere passion of originality," while the sense of being a *witness* saves him from "the unreality of repeating mere forms of statement which he has learned as orthodox but never realized as true."

In these ideals of the Christian ministry we have a corrective of that waning note of authority which obtains so largely in the pulpits of our generation and also of that growing tendency to exalt the messenger above the message, or to measure it by the pettiness and ecclesiastical assumptions of the man who speaks it.

John kept fast hold upon this double consciousness. He carried a message, not his own, yet it had come through the struggle and travail of his soul as he had heard the voice of the Unseen in the solitudes of the desert, and also the hollowness and hungers of the age in which he lived. The time was ripe, as it always is, for the coming of such a man, who combined the spirit and homage of the past with the "wandering eye" of the watchman who waits for the coming of a greater than himself, whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose and the increase of whose kingdom shall have no end.

In preparation for this kingdom of righteousness he calls upon men to put away their sins, their habits of evil thought and speech and their hollow formalities of religion, and to "speak every man the truth to his neighbor," to "do justly, and to love mercy" not as a single and isolated event, but as a perpetual and daily experience, whereby the soul shall be lifted from the lower to the higher choices in character and conduct.

With this call to personal repentance, he prophecies the near fulfilment of the Messianic hopes of Israel, until, like fire in the prairie grass, the truth of the message and the faith of the messenger are both lodged in the heart of the people—and the highway is cast up for the coming of the Anointed of the Lord.

We mark the traits of *courage* in this pioneer and partial preacher of the kingdom, the tremendous sense of the *divine commission* which filled him, the *definite and direct* character of the *message* he brought, and the sense of *utter unconsciousness* with which he did his work. They stand as models for all the coming messengers of the churches, while the great answer he gives concerning his mission is worthy a place in the study of every minister of Christ: "I am the *voice* of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord"—a *voice* which rings clear and true and then dies away into silence, to be forgotten in the articulated glory of the truth which remains. Such is the modest and autobiographical note with which he defines himself and every other true messenger of the cross. An eagle-like man he was, who knew no fear because he had no self-consciousness which makes cowards of us all.

In the presence of this notable preacher of an old and new time, who served as a bridge across which the Jew might pass from the old covenant into the new, and who sealed his ministry with the initial martydom of the Christian era,

we stand uncovered, as Jean Paul stood before the church door in Wittenburg, while certain questions arise which rest heavily upon the hearts of this generation:—

Why is it that the vocation of the ministry has fallen into partial eclipse and that the pulpit is no longer the goal of Christian homes? We realize that other and equal doors of usefulness have been opened and that Christian activities have greatly multiplied, but why is it that fathers and mothers are so reluctant to set apart their sons to the service of the church, and these sons themselves so indifferent to the call of the Christian ministry?

Is it because the prizes of commercial life are so dazzling, or the demands of industrial and scientific pursuit so absorbing? But these do not foil the growth of other professions, such as medicine or the law.

Is it judged that the ministry is in leading-strings to tradition and dogma and so barred from honest research and freedom of thought? Is the impression abroad that the church has lost its note of authority in teaching and its pulpit discredited in the mazes of popular knowledge, or does the profession of the ministry have something unmanly and presumptuous in it? Surely no vocation makes larger demand upon manliness, and with the ideal of the prophet substituted for the priest, the office of the ministry calls out the virile graces of courage, of service and of love. While we live in times of reconstruction and critical research the great and abiding truths of religion grow clearer and stronger—the character of God, his wish and will for men, their relationships to him and to each other, the eternal laws of righteousness, of seed-time and harvest, and the undying hopes and fears of the endless life—these abide in the ebb and flow of theological tides in sovereignty everlasting. He who handles these great themes with clean hands and an honest soul has the liberty of the sons of God in finding and giving the message of the

Highest, while to no man is it given as to the Christian minister to enter into the joys and sorrows of his fellow men with the gospel of consolation and the rectifying standards of the kingdom of heaven.

It is true that great changes have come upon the work and office of the ministry in these later days. The old-time dignity and homage, the social prestige, the authority of exalted scholarship and infallible character, these have gone into the limbo of the past, nevermore to return. But in their stead have come the truer and more human ideals of the servant and the friend, the manly man and his message of the divine love for the rich and poor, the social outcast and the little child, and the divine rule of righteousness for the home, the church and the state.

Into this larger and nobler conception of the ministry it is ours to turn the hearts and minds of our children. While its prizes are not material, its satisfactions and joys are deep and abiding, for the real rewards of life are not in things but rather in "the property rights of souls."

John Ruskin says that the issues of life and death for modern society are in the Christian pulpit. That this has been its historic place in Germany, in Scotland and England no one will doubt, but that it shall be the great solvent of the class problems and the social questions of our time will depend upon the church and home of this generation.

If the work of the ministry is girded by the prayers of Christian homes and honored in the business practices and spiritual ideals of the church, the vocation of the messenger of Christ will again be lifted upon the hearts of young men, and the revival and glory of the office of the preacher will return, for the world has not heard its best preaching yet nor seen its greatest preachers.

William H. Davis.

THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS

MATT. 3: 13; 4: 11

"Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."—Matt. 3: 15.

It was a time of "expectation" among the Jews. The recorded utterances of their prophets seemed to bring a sort of focal light upon this era of their history. They were looking for the appearance of the Messiah. A wonderful meteor had suddenly appeared in their national horizon in John the Baptist. Like his unique prototype Elijah, whom in many ways he so much resembled, he came unheralded, but with a message of such startling portent, that it arrested at once the attention of the expectant people, *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

This was the one text of the single sermon that he preached with clarion voice. It was iterated and reiterated with such tremendous earnestness, that not only was the man forgotten in the importance and urgency of his message, but what was more singular still, he seemed not only thoughtless but forgetful of his own identity. He counted it of no moment, or wholly lost it, in the overwhelming character and purpose of his mission. His sublime answer to those who made inquiry as to who he might be, was, "I am the *voice* of one crying in the wilderness." History does not furnish a man so absolutely and resolutely self-effaced:—*"only a voice!"* Surely he was a worthy forerunner of Him who came not to be "ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

The whole nation seems to have been awakened by John's preaching. All classes flocked to the banks of their national river to be baptized of him. Among them came one who as yet was little known beyond the precincts of the city where he had dwelt from infancy,—Jesus of Nazareth. Whether John had any personal acquaintance with Jesus may be questioned. That he knew of his pure life and character is certain, however, from the manner in which he accosted him when he requested baptism at his hands. That he did not suspect that he was the promised Messiah until after the ordinance was administered, and the heaven-promised sign given is equally certain. John's strong statement to Jesus, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" must have been due to something more than his characteristic modesty, for he does not seem to have hesitated in regard to any other. It was a tribute to character and worth already achieved, and to some extent known, and, as we have already intimated, was not owing to any previous knowledge of Jesus' Messiahship; for John subsequently states that the sign of this,—the descending dove,—was given after the baptism.

Jesus and John were kinsmen; but the circumstances of their life had entirely separated them. John, as a child in the house of the blameless priest, his father, had lived at Juttah, in the far south of the tribe of Judah, and not far from Hebron: Jesus had lived in the deep seclusion of Galilee. They may never have met until this day upon the banks of the Jordan. At this period the power and influence of John over the public mind were at the highest level that they attained. Jesus, humanly speaking, was but an unknown man, hardly more than upon the threshold of manhood, whose higher character was as yet untried. Yet John concedes him, at once, the first place. In the strongest language he declares himself immeasurably in-

ferior to him who had but just now been standing among the crowd, unmarked and unregarded, while the expectant multitude were debating whether John himself might not be the long looked-for Messiah. He who was the Hope of Israel, was already in their very midst, unheralded, unrecognized.

Perhaps the full consciousness of his Sonship and divine mission had but recently dawned upon Jesus. As he is about to begin his work, he would receive baptism as both ratifying the mission of his great forerunner, and also as the beautiful symbol of moral purification and the humble inauguration of a ministry which came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil. His own words give this assurance, "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." The descending dove and the attesting Voice witness to his Messianic character and appointment. It was his solemn designation to the work to which he was publicly to devote himself. It was the true birth-hour of Christianity. At this time he evidently attained the full consciousness of his nature and mission as the God-man and Saviour.

It would seem that the great object of Jesus' baptism was to give an example of simple obedience. Any confession of sin upon his part is unthinkable. There was only a profession, that, as an Israelite, he became subject to the law, and that he was connected with humanity by the ties of blood, of history, of suffering and of love. There is nothing in the life of Jesus more impressive than his constant example of obedience. It first manifested itself in his childhood years, when it is recorded of him in Luke 2:51, "And he went down with them [his parents], and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them." He recognized the civil authority then over the country, and paid tribute to it, although it was unquestionably oppressive and tyrannical. He recognized also the spiritual

leadership of those who sat in "Moses' seat," and bade his disciples "do and observe" according to their teachings, but not according to "their works; for they say, and do not."

Christianity has never promoted anarchy or given encouragement to lawlessness. Obedience to duly constituted authority is one of its basal principles, and so it has always led the van of the world's civilization. The lesson of obedience is primal in the development of character. One never serves acceptably and honorably who has not first learned to *obey*. Such lessons are not always easy. They are usually acquired in the schools of discipline and often in that of suffering. The mysterious record is made of the Master, that, "he learned obedience by the things which he suffered." In these lax days there is too often manifested an indifference to the divinely ordained ordinances of religion. It is not infrequently suggested that it does not matter whether they be observed or not. Such suggestions and practices find no encouragement in the life and teachings of our Lord. He was scrupulous in the observance of all the requirements of the Jewish religion.

The temptation of Jesus is one of the most mysterious passages in his life to elucidate and explain. We cannot resolve the whole account into myth and allegory, for this is simply evading all the questions at issue, and in a way discrediting the whole Gospel narrative. We would fairly face and meet the difficulties of the case,—at the same time frankly confessing, that here, as in many other circumstances of his incarnation, we cannot fathom the mysteries involved in the inexplicable union of the human with the divine. Many things in the Bible and in the nature of Christ are revealed as mysteries, of which no explanation is given us in the Word of God. Perhaps if an explanation were attempted, we should not be able, with our present

limitations, to understand it. It is evident, however, that Jesus was here tested by the same class of temptations as often come to men. He must enter into the experiences of men in order to fully sympathize with them and intelligently help them. There is a philosophy in the incarnation which may help us at this point.

To get at the meaning foreshadowed, let us consider for a moment the essential difference between *pity* and *sympathy*. The distinction is not always made. Many use the words synonymously, and make as little difference in their thinking about them as in their use of them. And yet there is a difference that is obvious upon reflection. Pity usually implies compassion, and generally inclines to some benevolent act. Sympathy, on the other hand, puts the sufferer and the one sympathizing with him upon an *equality* by their *fellow feeling*. It is evident, then, that one cannot have real sympathy without common experiences. Do not these thoughts and others that they will certainly suggest, unlock for us some of the mysteries of the incarnation and aid us to an understanding of a reason for the temptations of Christ? Through them he entered into our experiences. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18).

> "Touched with a sympathy within,
> He knows our feeble frame:
> He knows what sore temptations mean,
> For He has felt the same."

When he took on him the form of a servant he became by his own will subject to everything which can affect human nature. These temptations to which he was one after the other subjected, were typical of those that have assailed man from the beginning. The first appealed to the *animal* appetites, the second *the gratification of admiration,*—the love of show—and the third appealed to the *ambition.*

The first was animal, the second esthetical, the third the love of power and its manifestation, the most supreme passion of all. This is the very triple division referred to by St. John, "The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life." Are they not also taken together, the very same temptations by which our progenitors in Eden were assailed?—the fruit was good for food, and so appealed to the appetite; it was pleasant to the eyes, and so pleased the sense of beauty; it would make them as the gods, and so awakened their ambition. The great ones of history have all in turn been tested by these powerful and yet insidious temptations and by yielding to one or all, alas, how many of them have fallen!

To wrestle, then, with these seductive temptations, that apparently promised such immediate and hopeful realizations, to foil the insidious tempter with his own chosen weapons, expose the fallacy of his conclusions and unmask at last his Satanic purpose and character: these all were the successive tests by which Jesus proved his own fitness for his Messianic office and prepared himself by participation in human experiences to be the sympathizer and succorer of all them who are tempted. For great missions the preparation is great trials. For this great purpose, the redemption of the race, there must be no uncertain preliminary training, no tests that are not adequate and final. Where others have been overcome by passion and appetite, by presumption and the lust of power, he stands firm and unshaken. His spotless purity is untarnished. His moral purposes are unweakened. Satàn, triply foiled, departs from the victor in the long strife, while the watching, waiting angels minister to him in his faintness and weariness.

The victory is his,—and ours; for in Jesus we have a sympathizing Saviour who is able, because of his own human experiences in meeting and conquering temptation, to understand our struggles and aid us in our conquests.

"For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." We may safely trust in him, who in his own person met the same kind of temptations that assail us, and put to flight the same tempter who in the guise of an angel of light often endeavors to lead us astray with false promises and lying words.

"Help me, thou great all patient! for the flesh
Will sometimes falter, and the spirit fail;
Add to my human, thy diviner strength,
When next I falter, rouse my faith as now,
That out of darkness I may see great light
And follow where it ever leads to thee."

Elijah Horr.

JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH

LUKE 4: 16-30

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."—John 1: 11.
"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up."

This rejection of the Saviour by the people of his own home, we regard as a very tragic and pathetic circumstance in his earthly career. Yet it came about very naturally, and was the result of no especial depravity or spiritual dulness in the people of Nazareth. It arose from a trait of human nature to which men in all times have been exposed. The Master himself accounted for it by appeal to a proverbial weakness in mankind. "Verily," or as we should say, "Of course." It has always been so. "No prophet is acceptable in his own country," or in the more expressive phrase of Mark, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." Thus Jesus draws a moral which pierces the heart of men in all generations, and seems almost to address us personally, saying to us, What my townsmen did on that day is what perhaps you would do in like case; nay, it may be it is what in principle you are doing. One result of this turn which he gives to the event is to make the whole scene very real, and make us look at it not with pharisaic condemnation, but with humble sympathy.

How natural it all was! The young man whom those villagers of Nazareth turned out from their place of worship is to us the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. To them he was one of their own boys. He had grown up

with them; he with his brothers and sisters had played in their streets, and they had known him as the son of Joseph the carpenter, and as a carpenter himself; he had perhaps shaped the tools they were still using in the home or farm. But he was more than their village child and artisan. In the experiences by the Jordan and in the wilderness, the "glory in his bosom" had come to the surface, and shone with a new light upon his face, and through his words as he spoke in the old synagogue of Nazareth that day. His neighbors were taken off their guard, and bore witness that he spoke with grace and power. An unwonted radiance was upon his face, a new authority in his tones; and they listened, before they knew what they were doing, as to a prophetic word from God.

But this happy receptiveness was soon stifled by the conventional way of seeing things. They soon cooled down their enthusiasm, saying one to another, Is he not one of our own boys,—the son of Mary and Joseph? Was he not but a short time ago working with his father, making or mending our plows and yokes? And his sisters are still with us. "And they were offended in him." They could not take at its worth the divine word that spoke and shone from him because of this stumbling-block, that he was of their own people and neighborhood. Jesus' answer shows that here as elsewhere he is speaking to a wider audience than those few listeners. It is a universal trait of human nature, he says, to miss the great, the divine, in things which are near and familiar. We must confess that this is true.

I. We find it true of our attitude toward the world of nature. A plant or flower must be an exotic before we wonder and admire. The mullein which we treat as a common weed is cultivated in foreign lands for the soft texture and hue of its foliage. Were there but one dandelion in the field we might go far to find it, but because the grass is

starred with dandelions and the waysides refulgent with goldenrod and asters, we forget that they are beautiful. Not many of those people in Nazareth had ever remarked that the lily of the field,—not of the garden,—was arrayed in a beauty that outshone the glory of Solomon; not one had thought of going to flowers like that, and birds that flitted near, for a revelation of the heart of God. Let us remember that Jesus gave us not only knowledge of God, but he pointed to sources of that knowdelge that every soul may have. In the beauty and order and providence of nature without he found his evidence of the universal benevolence of God, and in that most common of things, the love which grows in human homes, he found the parable and proof of his supreme message, the Fatherhood of God. But as he tells us in another word of his, we are too occupied in looking for "a sign," something strange and rare, to find this evangel which blooms at our door-step, and breathes in our hearts.

II. Again, for the same reason that we slight the near and the common, we distrust and depreciate the present and the modern. The age of chivalry and heroism lies in the past, and gains prestige as it becomes remote. "We build the sepulchers of prophets," whom their contemporaries slew, and may be equally unkind to inspired men of our day, whom the future will honor as prophets. In the same blindness to the worth of the present, we set our hopes on the future, and expect then our millennium. The desires of the men of Jesus' time were fixed on the coming of the kingdom of God. They were asking when it should come, or whether it were already past, but the startling word of Jesus was, "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you." Thus Milton cried to the skepticism of his generation, "The power of Thy grace is not passed away with the primitive times, as fond and faithless friends imagine, but Thy kingdom is now at hand and Thou standing at the door."

Why is it that we cut ourselves off from the inspiration and joy of feeling that we are in the midst of divine movements, and participators with God as truly as our fathers? If God's shaping hand was in the discovery of America, the voyage of the Mayflower, the declaration of independence, the proclamation of emancipation, can it be less controlling in the critical events of to-day,—the struggle for the purity of our cities, the solving of imperial problems, the preservation and growth of faith in the midst of an intellectual revolution? What was there in the task and calling of our fathers to make them solemn and earnest, brave and prayerful, that may not be found in even greater measure in the extent and importance of our problems?

No doubt the work of God is upon a scale too vast for us to interpret at close range. We must stand off from his canvas, and then the black lines, coarse pigments and confused strokes blend and grow purposeful in the large thought and total meaning of the picture. Time gives us the true perspective; it suppresses the petty or faulty details in character or action, and allows the grandeur of the ruling ideas, the trend and movement of the whole to come to view.

But there is all the more reason to have the faith all the time, that the divine is speaking and is at work. The past is glorious not because it is more divine, but because the divine is more apparent than to-day. If our hearts are troubled and our faith falters, because the times seem so earthly, trivial, selfish or base, let us remember that the grandest epochs of the past wore the same aspect to men then living. The secret of noble life is to be faithful in details, and yet work by the inspiration of large purpose and plan. The greatest things that men have ever done had always their trivial and commonplace accessories: and at the time the accessories seem to strive to eclipse the substance.

"We would every deed
Perform at once as grandly as it shows
After long ages . . .
It sounds so lovely what our fathers did,
And what we do is, as it was to them,
Toilsome and incomplete."

"Toilsome and incomplete" no doubt, "compassed with infirmity," surrounded with what was poor and mean and miserable, appeared to many the career of the Man of Nazareth, who alone was to make the name of his humble city known through all ages and lands. "Toilsome and incomplete," full of pangs and disgust and disappointment, has often been the work of genius as it slowly grew in the mind of its creator; "toilsome and incomplete," the efforts of leaders of great movements for the overthrow of wrong, for the deliverance and happiness of peoples; "toilsome and incomplete," the labor of him who, in daily contact with all that is disgusting and desperate, spends life to bring the mercies and hope of Christ into the "coarse miseries and festering vices which girdle round our brilliant capitals, our great seats of industry and wealth." Only in after years does their work lift itself up to its true grandeur; only then do we lose sight of partial blemishes, of all that made it while it was going on so unspeakably depressing, and see it as it is at last. Verily, no age is without honor save among its own children.

III. The tendency thus to undervalue the near and familiar, takes another form, which presses more closely to the instance of our text and to our own intimate life. It is when we fail to perceive the greatness and sacredness of the life and character acting and growing within the circle of home and love. It was a sad skepticism, which we all share, that prevented those Nazarenes from believing that something noble might be growing up in the heart and mind of one of their own village boys. Yet what is all

the life and character born and bred under our own roofs but soil in which God's Spirit may plant and nurture seeds of truth and righteousness? In this figure of the soil, human and earthly, and the seed divine, we may find the explanation of our low estimate of common life. The earthy groundwork of our life, the homely incidents and experiences which make up the material substance of our existence, the faults petty and serious which grow like weeds in congenial soil, are ever plain and obtrusive. To think of life and human nature seen at close range with the familiarity that breeds contempt, as very far from Godlike or even heroic or saintly is natural enough. But what are the products of personality in remote times which we honor and revere? They are strength, fortitude, bravery, patience, tenderness, devotion. These are divine, these are the attributes which we connect with God. In him they are cleared of all defect, and raised to infinite power. But if ever we have seen them, or heard of them as realities, it is in the sphere of our human life, embodied in our human nature,—the same environment, the same nature as that we share and daily love and deal with. If the soil is earthly, coarse, common, the life of God is ever striving to fertilize and beautify it with divine impulses. We cannot deny that the divine is thus springing to life among the lives near to us. The seed and the sower are unseen, the growth hidden, gradual, silent, but as we sleep and rise night and day, it springs up and grows we know not how. Whether we discover it in the blade, the ear, or the full corn in the ear, we are not to scorn it as worthless because it has sprung up where we least expected, in the common soil of our own dooryards. We need not go to history for examples of courage, endurance, sacrifice. The classic examples of history are indeed never to be forgotten. But their use is to illustrate the essential capacities of our nature,—the same nature that

lives and breathes close about us. The more in the past we find to enkindle and thrill our hearts, the more expectant and ready we should be to see these qualities in action in the lives that are not enrolled on the pages of fame, or made sacred by translation beyond the grave, but wear the fleshly robe, and struggle with the burdens and trials of the life that now is. Does history describe fortitude greater than we sometimes find in the lives around us, patience that is sweeter or more touching than that which shines like "kindly light" in quietly enduring lives in our own households, or among our friends, growing strong out of the soil of sickness or suffering, of adversity or loss?

The pity of it is, that by one depreciatory phrase, "Is not this the carpenter," we can make as nothing to our hearts all the evidences of divine traits which give worth and sweetness to our daily life; that any relations should become so familiar to us, so much taken for granted, that we become blind to the glory that suffuses them. "We are moving continually on holy ground, yet we forget to take the shoes off our feet; we are surrounded and defended every day by the chariots and horsemen of the Lord, yet our eyes are not opened to see what is too near for our faith." We are as those who entertain angels unawares.

Let us believe that it is God's world we live in, that it is no extravagance to say of our generation with the apostle, "Now are we the sons of God." The glory of God manifesting his own beauty looks forth upon us from the flowers that bloom at our door, coming fresh to us from the touch of his love. The kingdom of God is among us, with his calls to our life and service in his purposes. Our neighbors and kindred are sons and daughters of the King, and bear in the kindness and courage of their hearts marks of their loyal lineage. Lo, God is here! At any place,

at any moment, in any duty, in any companionship, we may awake to his presence and say, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Charles L. Noyes.

JESUS CALLS FOUR DISCIPLES

LUKE 5: 1-11

"Now it came to pass, while the multitude pressed upon him and heard the word of God," etc.

In the making of disciples Jesus Christ is distinguished above all leaders of men. The simplicity of his method, his success in winning men, the character of his followers and their influence in the progress of the race indicate his supremacy.

The scene at the Sea of Galilee when Jesus calls four disciples is as instructive as it is interesting. The manifestation of divinest attributes on the part of Jesus and the response of awed and adoring men with vows of everlasting fealty make it a really great occasion. Attention centers upon the Master and his disciples as they appear in that scene. We note

I. *The Absoluteness of the Master.*

Jesus made the impression upon those early disciples of his supreme lordship. We cannot detect any doubt on the part of those disciples respecting the authority of Jesus. They felt that it was his to command and theirs to obey, and their sense of the authority of Jesus was not without a deep feeling of adoration and love for him. It is not probable that they saw as clearly then as in later time the moral glory of their Lord, but they had seen enough to convince them that he was worthy of their utmost loyalty. How this sense of the supreme lordship of Jesus had been awakened in them is a large question. The

fact, itself, however, does not depend upon any particular explanation of it.

One of the most significant things in the narrative before us relates to Peter. When what is called the miraculous draught of fishes had been made, Peter was profoundly impressed by the wisdom and graciousness of Jesus. There is a fine reference to this by the late Dean Farrar. He says: "Peter recognized the whole force of the miracle, and, with his usual impetuosity, falls at his Master's feet—to thank him? to offer him henceforth an absolute devotion?—No; but (and here we have a touch of indescribable truthfulness utterly beyond the power of the most consummate intellect to have invented) to exclaim, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' A flash of supernatural illumination had revealed to him both his own sinful unworthiness and who he was who was with him in the boat. It was the cry of self-loathing which had already realized something nobler. It was the first impulse of fear and amazement, before they had had time to grow into adoration and love. St. Peter did not mean the 'Depart from me,' he only meant—and this was known to the Searcher of hearts—'I am utterly unworthy to be near thee, yet let me stay.'" Dean Farrar speaks of a revelation of Christ which came to Peter by a flash of supernatural illumination. Is such teaching worthy of regard? Has not the doctrine of a supernatural Jesus passed? Is not the language of the great English preacher extravagant, to say the least? Is not all talk about supernatural causes in the religious experience of men of the nature of superstition? This seems to be the opinion of some good men who are zealous for a naturalistic philosophy of the Christian religion. But Christianity is the divine life in the world. Christ is not a creature of evolutionary processes. He is the sovereign Lord, one with the Father eternally. "All

things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made."

We cannot explain the influence of Jesus apart from a recognition of his masterful personality, transcending all the powers of humanity. The call of Jesus, bidding men follow him as disciples, includes not only every element of appeal to the mind and heart of man, but also the direct personal influence of an independent, transcendent being. When Jesus lived in this world men saw him and heard him and were informed in natural ways of his wisdom and goodness. But what may be called the natural manifestations of his goodness and power were continually reenforced by what Dean Farrar calls flashes of supernatural illumination. God was present in the person of his Son Jesus Christ. Men recognized a more than human presence, they felt a more than human call to discipleship. Those who left all to follow him seem to have been wonderfully moved to the fullest surrender. It is true that Peter faltered and denied his Lord, but only to rouse himself thenceforth to the most splendid loyalty, and Philip's philosophy failed to identify the Father and the Son, and Thomas voiced some doubt regarding the real resurrection of Jesus; but the appearance presented by Jesus in relation to his disciples is always and everywhere of a supreme, infinitely masterful personality drawing men to himself and holding them as his own, not indeed without satisfying rational instincts but especially by supreme personal influence. St. Paul was born in the new birth of a man, when Saul of Tarsus was overpowered by the heavenly vision and Jesus spoke to him with the authority of the heavenly King. The real, the essential history of Christianity is the story of the ever-repeated miracle of the new birth. The absolute Master who is Saviour and Lord continues his work by the Holy Spirit.

Around the doctrine of the deity of Christ move the

religious controversies of the Christian centuries. But with unshaken stability and ever-widening sway this doctrine survives. It is the stronghold of Christian faith. It is the essential belief of Christian life. Without it faith suffers loss of vitality, the individual falls short of the greatest motive and the highest inspiration, and the church becomes heartless and cold. Naturalistic philosophy serves as a screen to shut away the light and warmth of the Sun of Righteousness. A modern philosopher in the sphere of religious thought, Dr. George A. Gordon, speaks with refreshing and inspiring power respecting the great Master of disciples: "Shall one boldly contend that the historic faith concerning the person of Christ as the Eternal Son of God rests upon the higher reason of mankind, and that, although the light is too dazzling to admit of utter penetration, one can behold the various highways of rational inquiry converging upon and terminating in the inaccessible splendor? This seems to me the sound position. . . . Jesus is a fact too transcendent to be accommodated to the requirements of a given philosophy. The scheme that is to prevail, that is not doomed to disastrous collision with reality, must grow out of the historic truth. . . The assertion that Christ cannot be very God of very God, in a sense infinitely beyond what may be truthfully said of all other human beings, is sheer intellectual presumption, is indeed dogmatism of the worst kind. . . . . The old faith in the deity of Christ is of the utmost significance for the purified ideal of socialism. That sublime belief beholds in the Godhead the ground of human society, its plan, its creative source, and the dynamics of the eternal life that will at last make the heavenly communion of Father and Son and Holy Spirit actual in the earthly brotherhood. . . . . Our civilization is the product of Christ."

In this study of the lesson before us, we note first of all

a fact of immeasurable and infinitely glorious significance —the supreme lordship of Jesus Christ. A few sentences forming a brief narrative have been set forth as the lesson to engage the attention of millions of Bible students on a specified week. It is entitled: "Jesus calls Four Disciples." We naturally ask who this Jesus is. The whole meaning and value of this bit of New Testament history turns upon the answer to that question. The discipleship we are invited to consider is mean or noble, insignificant or glorious according as is the nature and character of the Master. If he were only a man, although very pure of heart and keen of intellect, to learn of him and follow him might be good, but there would be mournful limitations to his power to heal and comfort and save immortal souls whose wants and desires transcend all human knowledge and power. But our faith is not in one who is no more than human. We believe in the Eternal Son of God, who has been manifested in the flesh, who has fulfilled all the requirements and possibilities of a perfect man, and who is divine in the highest sense, "the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever." This is the Master in whose absolute lordship it is comforting and safe and satisfying to rest. This is the Master whom to obey and follow greatens and glorifies the human soul. It were not possible for some persons, even in the experience of the most genuine humility, to submit to any man, who is only man, as master. No being short of Deity can truly command all the powers and possibilities of mankind. There are those who must, on the most reasonable grounds, refuse to leave all and follow any being who is not absolutely supreme. The absoluteness of the Master who called Peter and Andrew and James and John unto such discipleship as was theirs satisfies all the wants and aspirations of loyal humanity forevermore. We naturally turn now to consider:

II. *The Absoluteness of Christian Discipleship.*

It is recorded of the four disciples that "they left all, and followed him." Does Christian discipleship anywhere in any age mean less than that? Are there not essential conditions which always accompany genuine discipleship? There are indeed almost infinitely various circumstances of the followers of Christ, and as regards gifts and talents and opportunities of service variations abound, so much so that the very inequalities of human lot perplex and sometimes dishearten generous souls. But is there not something common to the disciples of Christ—a real, voluntary experience by virtue of which discipleship becomes a fact? Is it possible for any one to be Christ's disciple without leaving all and following him?

The teachings of Christ and his method of making disciples, so far as it is shown us in the Gospels, indicate that a real and enduring or ever renewed self-surrender of one's self to him is absolutely essential to discipleship. If various sayings of the Master with reference to following him mean anything, it is evident that he will have sincere and entire loyalty, and that his grace and power can be realized only by those who will leave all, and follow him. This does not mean that the new disciple has attained unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It does not mean an unnatural or unreasonable holding aloof from objects and interests of this world which are plainly intended of God to engage human attention and care. But it does mean self-surrender to Christ and devotion to him which are properly characterized by the term absolute. It is not necessary to combat the idea of asceticism, although that man of straw is frequently set up by religious leaders who seem to be very anxious to make the impression that Christian discipleship is, at the most, only slightly distinguished from non-discipleship, and ought to be taken quite easily.

The greatest danger which threatens the Christian church at the present time is the tendency from within the church to belittle the meaning of discipleship. Real piety is regarded by some as out of date, and institutionalism is put before Christ. The results may be good in some respects for a season, but the more vital, spiritual character of the church is declining, wherever adherence to an institution is made more prominent than personal relationship to the Master, involving the sense of need and prayer and grateful service. One St. Paul with a vision of Christ that made him feel that he was the chief of sinners, and with a thankful, loving, adoring purpose holding him steadfast in the service of his Lord—such a disciple is worth more to the world than a host of professed followers of Christ who are willing, in a patronizing way, to join the church because the best people are in it, etc. One St. Peter saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," then, though still human, impulsive, faltering, fiery, with a mighty purpose of personal loyalty, going on to Pentecost and martyrdom—such a disciple outweighs multitudes of half-hearted disciples who are anxious not to take religion too seriously.

The minister who is needed, although he may not be wanted by some churches, is the man with an element of John the Baptist in him, so that with a mighty conviction of the fact of the sinfulness of mankind he shall dare to call men to repentance. He is also the man who has an element of St. Paul in him, so that he shall "count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," and shall declare "the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden," and shall make men see and hear Christ whose personal love is the constraining power of Christian discipleship. The minister who is needed must be alive to the modern world, he must be able to read the signs of the times, and appreciate the fact that

"The thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns."

But he should not attempt to dethrone Christ, and give him rank below the Godhead; he should not attempt to depreciate the fact of sin; he should not concede that anything can take the place of Christ in the humble, trustful, adoring loyalty of the disciple. The modern minister may have much to do with social and institutional enterprises, but the minister who is needed must have, first of all, a passion for Christ, who died that we might be forgiven, and who lives that none may die.

The Sunday-school teacher who is needed is one who is well informed on the Scriptural text, and on the subjects which bear upon its interpretation. But of primary importance is a personal knowledge of Christ as the one and only Master, as the loving and almighty Saviour.

The disciple who is needed is not one who considers it a special favor to the Lord that he should confess him and have a part in the visible ongoings of his Church, but one who knows that Christ loves him, and forgives him, and helps him to be true and good; whose gratitude is deep, and whose purpose of loyalty is so real that he can rejoice in self-denial and strenuous service for Jesus' sake.

George E. Hall.

A SABBATH IN CAPERNAUM

MARK 1: 21-34

"And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught."

Jesus returned from the feast at Jerusalem, called his first permanent disciples, and with them went down and entered into Capernaum, which was the principal city in that region. "And straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught." When did not the Master take the shortest course to the performance of his duty? Whether it was to go up to Jerusalem, or over into the desert beyond Jordan, or back to his native town among the hills of Galilee, he always went directly, and with the least possible deviation from straight lines.

The synagogue of that large commercial city must have been a conspicuous building, much frequented by the Jews, and thither on the Sabbath Jesus went, accompanied by his disciples. All who heard were astonished at his teaching. Like himself, it was straight teaching. His words hit the mark. The people of that day had been used to hear from their religious instructors a circuitous or roundabout kind of teaching, but Jesus spoke directly to the heart and conscience, with no appeal to human authority other than that of man's own moral nature. There were no niceties, no clever sayings, no flights of oratory, no splitting of hairs, but clear, limpid talk, coming straightway from his heart and entering straightway into theirs.

There was no mistaking his meaning, and no dodging of issues. They were convinced. Often they were confounded, and asked "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

There has never been a day, from that time to this, when the words of the Christ have not as unerringly found their mark and accomplished the purpose for which they were spoken. They never return to him void. Those who read them to-day are both smitten and healed. They throw light into the soul, and so illuminate a man's moral nature that he ceases to be one of the children of darkness, and becomes one of the children of light.

The definition of a straight line, that it is the shortest distance between any two points, applies to his teaching, for his words always conduct docile minds directly, and by the shortest road, to the truth. Like the messages of wireless telegraphy, which go straight through seas, mountains, cities and ships, the warnings and precepts of the perfect Master take the shortest cut from error to truth, from darkness to light, from sin to holiness. No time is wasted, no unnecessary labor is demanded, but with unerring accuracy the true ways of life are pointed out. There is no excuse for ignorance.

The human heart has been the same in all ages, and it was with those who heard Jesus teach in Capernaum, as it is to-day with many who listen to his words or read them out of the New Testament. They were astonished or amazed, and something in them responded to his appeals and sayings. It was as though a breeze from heaven swept over the hearts of the multitude gathered that Sabbath day in their synagogue. The high ideals thrilled their hearts, and the lofty words commanded assent. They were spellbound, but not changed. They went out and forgot what manner of men they had been, under the splendor and beauty of such teaching. The deep impression passed

away. Alas, that man should so soon forget! that a being who has such power to respond instantly to the best and highest in thought, should also be able to turn away, extinguish the holy impulse, and sink into a state worse than the one from which he was for a moment roused!

In the life of Jesus there was always something doing. While he taught, suddenly one of his hearers with an unclean spirit cried out, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Nazarene? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." It was impossible for hearers to be still. Jesus uncovered men's souls. The impure and unclean cannot stand in his presence. Light to diseased eyes is blinding.

Jesus who had the witness of God and of beneficent works would receive no testimony from unclean and demonized beings. He rebuked the unclean spirit, and commanded him—"Hold thy peace, and come out of him." Then something surprising happened. The multitude were spellbound, for in their midst was the spectacle of the victim being torn or convulsed, while the unclean spirit with loud, fierce cries came out of him. They had never seen it on this fashion. The so-called exorcists among them, who had fallen into contempt, and who made it their profession to drive out evil spirits, used magic and ceremonial incantations; but were often attacked and overcome by the furious beings they undertook to control. Here, however, in Jesus was a moral power, blended with sweetness and majesty, before which nothing could stand. The furious man became at once quiet and gentle, and was forever made free from his terrible bondage.

Again, we see how the power of Jesus worked directly, or in straight lines. The effect was instantaneous. One short, sharp paroxysm, and the sufferer, though exhausted, was completely pacified. The beholders looked in each others faces astounded, almost terrified, and asked in won-

der, "What is this? What new doctrine? What new authority?" It seemed incredible.

There was, however, no delay, for to use Mark's insistent word, "straightway," they came out of the synagogue and entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Go where we will in this world, we encounter suffering, weakness and misery. Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. It was a disease common in that region, both painful and dangerous. "The Talmud gives it the same name, 'burning fever' and prescribes for it a magical remedy, of which the principal part is to tie a knife, wholly of iron, by a braid of hair to a thornbush, and to repeat on successive days Exodus 3 : 2, 3, then 4, and finally 5, after which the bush is to be cut down, while a certain magical formula is pronounced."

Turning from this direction concerning incantation, to the account given by Mark, we seem to be going out of one world into another. And indeed, it is passing from the world of superstition and magic, of darkness, misery and hopelessness, to the world of simplicity, life, health, purity and goodness. Before such goodness and truth, neither the unclean spirit which cried with a loud voice, nor the burning fever which wasted the frame and destroyed the life, could for a moment endure. The spirit fled away, and the fever left her. It is like the coming of light into darkness, or order into confusion and anarchy.

When, or where, or under what circumstances, in any age of the world, have like results failed to follow the advent of Jesus, the healing of whose seamless dress is still by our beds of pain? We have our Galilee to-day, and if sickness is no longer cured by his word, there are yet more wonderful and valuable tokens of his power, in hearts delivered from sin, bondage and misery, and made to rejoice with a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. We have the greater rather than the less. The soul of

every man who comes under the power of Jesus is made sound and whole. The spirit which was bowed down and overwhelmed, is lifted and made calm, strong and pure.

The day was now drawing to its close. It was even, and the sun was set. The Sabbath was over, and those who had waited in their houses through the long hours, because it was the Sabbath day, and must be ceremonially kept, now ventured forth. "They brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with demons. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons; and he suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him."

What happiness there must have been in many a home that night, as the invalid who had dragged through months or years perhaps, appeared at the door strong and well; or the lame man carried to the house of Simon, walked back on his own feet with all lameness gone; or the blind man who had groped his way, feeling along the wall, and listening to the glad cries of deliverance, now returned moving freely with his restored sight! There is perhaps no single scene in our Lord's life, which so well and perfectly sums up in a single graphic picture, the meaning and purpose for which he came down from heaven to earth. It evidently left a deep and abiding impression on the minds of the evangelists, which affected all they said or wrote in after years, concerning Jesus of Nazareth. We may well believe that no one who was there could ever forget the day when he saw the lame walking, the dumb speaking, the blind seeing, and those possessed of evil and impure spirits sitting, clothed and in their right minds, at the feet of the Master. Their writings were colored or tinctured through and through by this day's occurrences, and without doubt they were thus fitted to understand, as they could in no other way, the mission of Him who came not to condemn

the world but that the world through him might be saved. He proved himself to be not only Master of the winds and the waves, of sickness and infirmity, but what is far more, of human hearts and human lives.

"Never, surely," says Edersheim, "was he more truly the Christ; nor is he, in symbol, more truly such to us, and to all time, than when in the stillness of that evening, under the starlit sky, he went through that suffering throng, laying his hands in the blessing of healing on every one of them, and casting out many devils. No picture of the Christ is more dear to us than this of the unlimited healing of whatever disease of soul or body. In its blessed indefiniteness, it conveys the infinite potentiality of relief, whatever miseries have fallen on us, or whatever care and sorrow oppress us. He must be blind indeed, who sees not in this physician the divine Healer; in this Christ the light of the world; the restorer of what sin has blighted; the joy in our world's deep sorrow. Never was prophecy more truly fulfilled than on that evening, this of Isaiah; "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases."

Such is the story of a Sabbath in Capernaum, and we can do no more, and surely we can do no less, than to let it sink down into our minds, and work there its holy and beautiful lessons like a sweet miracle, remembering what he said,—"And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Edward Beecher Mason.

JESUS FORGIVES SINS

MARK 2: 1-12

"And when he entered again into Capernaum," etc.

No miracle among all that our Lord performed is more picturesque and striking in its setting than the one which in this lesson engages our attention. No other doctrine can be so important as that which Christ took occasion to teach with this miracle, for it involves the very heart of the gospel. It contains within itself the purpose of God and the mission of Jesus.

If we leave out the teaching of this lesson we have little left, not only in the Gospel of Mark, but in all revelation. The very name of Jesus contains the purpose of his life as here revealed. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." "The Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins;" is the gist of our lesson. It is thus connected with the birth of Jesus and with his death, with Bethlehem and Calvary, and there is little in the momentous days between Bethlehem and Calvary that does not center in the calm sentence that amazed the disciples and maddened the Pharisees: "Son, thy sins are forgiven."

The occasion that brought out and declared this tremendous truth is worth studying, for there is no more interesting incident in the Bible. Shortly before Jesus had cast out the evil spirits from the demoniac, and at once his fame began to spread. "The report of him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about."

No sooner had the fame of this miracle gone abroad than he healed Simon's wife's mother of her fever, simply by taking her by the hand and raising her up. This evidently increased a reputation already great, for, immediately, the throngs seemed to surround him and "multitudes" of the sick and the possessed with devils were brought to him, "and all the city was gathered together at the door." Still miracles were performed and still the reputation of the miracle worker grew. Weary and exhausted, perhaps fearing that his real mission would be obscured to these wonder-mongers by the very miracles that attested that mission, our Lord tries to escape the throngs. "A great while before day" he "departed into a desert place," but even there while he was praying and finding strength for still more arduous duties, he could not escape the throngs, for soon his disciples find him and tell him: "All are seeking thee." In the other towns to which Jesus went the same scenes awaited him. The sick and the leprous and the demoniacs thronged him, and, though he sought to hide himself in "desert places," "they came to him from every quarter."

At length he went to Capernaum again, and appears to have entered the city secretly, for it was not until "after some days" that "it was noised that he was in the house." Then the same scenes were repeated. The crowds were larger and more importunate than ever "so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door." In that motley throng must have been all classes and conditions of men. Sick and well, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, disciples and scoffers, and a multitude of mere curiosity seekers. Some were sightless, and some were deaf, some had loathsome sores, some were able to walk and some were supported by their friends. But here comes the strangest group of all. Four men stagger along, bearing a cot, on which is an entirely helpless paralytic. They

cannot get near the Healer, the crowd is so great. We can see them pushing, crowding, remonstrating, but it is no use. They are resourceful men, however, and are not to be balked by the crowd, so they go up to the low, flat housetop, break through the slight covering, and let their friend down through the roof.

This interesting scene has in itself much to delay us as we study this fruitful passage. The persistence of the friends, their resourcefulness, their final success, teach us many a lesson about bringing our friends to Jesus. They could not do it in the regular way, so they chose an irregular way. They could not get at him for the crowds, but they would let no obstacle interfere with their purpose. Their faith in Christ and their love for the sick man surmounted every difficulty. They had at last got at the Healer. They laid their helpless friend at his very feet, and they obtained the reward of their persistent faith. Such love and such faith never fail.

But these lessons have been often drawn and we must proceed to the heart of them: Jesus Christ forgives sin. It was a new thought. The world had never before seen a Sin Forgiver. It had had great men, forceful men, men who commanded success. It had had generals and lawgivers and poets and healers, but it never had had one who forgave sins. Abraham and Moses and Joshua and David and Isaiah were enshrined in the grateful memory of a nation, but no one of them ever thought of assuming the prerogative of God by absolving the sinner from his guilt. Even Aaron and the greatest of the high priests could only lay their hands upon the sacrifices or on the scapegoat and send him off into the wilderness, as a symbol that God forgave and forgot the sin of the penitent heart.

But here is a young Galilæan peasant lately thrust into prominence by his miracles of healing, who does what neither Aaron nor Moses ever dared to do. In his own

name and by his own might he forgives the sin of the paralytic. The scene is most dramatic. It is easy to picture it. The eager friends who would hesitate at nothing to get the sick man to the Healer have at last succeeded. There they stand, panting with their exertion, eager, expectant. There is only one thing that they want—the healing of their friend. For this they have taken all this pains. For this they have waited outside in the crowd. For this they tore up the roof and let him down in the midst. The sick man himself wants and expects nothing else. But what is this they hear? Not "Thou art healed," "Go in peace," "Take up the pallet and go home." Nothing of this sort as they had expected, but, "*Son, thy sins are forgiven.*"

Very likely they were as much disappointed as they were surprised. Was this all they had got for their pains? Was this all the great Healer could do for them? Who knew whether he could forgive sins? It was very easy for him to offer an immaterial blessing whose value could not be tested. However, whatever they thought, they apparently said nothing. Neither did the sick man make any complaint. But it was left to the skeptical, supercilious scribes as usual to make this complaint, and they soon voiced their own unbelief, and very likely the thought of most of those present by saying: "He blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God?" This opposition was just what Jesus expected. This questioning, perhaps, was just what he desired.

He was more than a miracle worker, and he must declare himself if he would fulfil his mission. In no other way could he startle even his own disciples into a knowledge of his real purpose in coming to earth. So he takes this occasion and this method which could not fail to make a profound impression, to declare the real reason of his incarnation. Up to this time it was the most important word he had spoken, and he chose the exact moment when it

would make the deepest impression. At once he perceived the skeptical thoughts of the hostile scribes, and giving them no chance to further voice their unbelief, he boldly declares, "The Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins," and in order that you may know it, I will say to the paralytic, that which is just as easy for me to say: "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." And the man obeyed him.

Two great teachings does this lesson contain. As great mountain peaks dominate all the surrounding country, and almost make their presence felt even by the blind, so these truths tower above even the attesting miracles and signs, of which these first chapters of Mark are so full.

First. Christ forgives sinful men. We may well tell the story o'er and o'er again. He claims to do this undeniably and unequivocally. If he claims to do it, his claim must be true, or else he is a charlatan and a deceiver of the worst type. If in this particular he fails, he fails everywhere. If in this respect he has deceived the world, we are deceived indeed, and are of all men most miserable. So a Christian only needs to satisfy himself that Christ makes the claim of being the Pardoner of sin. How could he have made it more emphatically or impressively? There was no mistake about it. The sick man understood him, and could not stir until he had spoken the second word of physical healing. The friends of the sick man in their dumb disappointment understood him, and looked on helplessly, feeling that their strenuous efforts had been in vain. The scribes understood him, and were evidently only too glad to catch him in what they considered open blasphemy. They at once charged him with it. Now he has a chance to deny what he said or modify it or explain it away. But he does nothing of the sort. He reaffirms what he said before, and proves that the Son of man has power to do what he had promised by performing a miracle he had not promised:

"That ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins."

Nothing could be stronger or more emphatic. He not only makes the assertion but performs a miracle to prove his power. If he had desired to make his meaning doubly plain, he could not have said more or done more to emphasize his statement. What does this involve? Nothing less than the deity of Christ. The scribes were right when they said: "Who can forgive sins but one, even God?" The answer is self-evident:—"No one." No one else but a madman or an impostor ever claimed to forgive sins by his own power. The godliest, the most saintly would have been the last ones to make this claim. It would have sounded as strange on the lips of Noah or Enoch, the men who walked with God, as on the lips of an ordinary saint. Elijah, the prophet, the forerunner of Christ himself, would have shrunk with horror from any such claim, and it would have sounded grotesque on the lips of Cæsar or Charlemagne or Napoleon.

But this Nazarene makes it and stands to it and proves it, when he stakes his ability to forgive sin on his ability to heal disease. He can do one as easily as the other, and he testifies to his power to do that which is hidden and invisible, by at once, promptly and with ease, doing that which is manifest to the eyes of all. He attests his higher power by using his lesser might, and saying to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house."

And this is the second thing for us to remember in this great lesson. Christ not only makes this claim but proves it to-day. He does not arrogate something to himself that is incapable of proof. He does not make a claim, and then leave the world to wonder whether or not it is an impotent charlatan that has made it. Those whose sins he forgives prove that their sins are forgiven by forsaking them, and living pure, honorable, upright lives. The

leopard has changed his spots a multitude of times, and the Ethiopian his skin. The foul have become clean, the leprous sound. The drunkard has become the saint, the licentious man has become pure, the thief has become honest, the murderer has become lamblike, because the Son of man has said to them, "Thy sins are forgiven."

There are greater miracles than the healing of the paralytic, and they follow the forgiveness of sins by Him who has the power to forgive; as in the olden day healing and forgiving went together. To make Jerry McAuley or Colonel Hadley, the drunken blasphemers, into the devoted, self-sacrificing, white-souled Christians that they became is more than to open the eyes of the blind, or to unstop the ears of the deaf. To turn Augustine or Francis of Assisi from worldliness to other-worldliness, from Satan to God, from the road to hell to the road to heaven, to subdue their passions and cleanse their lives, was more than to subdue the fever that raged in the veins of Peter's wife's mother, or to cleanse the leper.

But this the Son of man has done not once, or twice, but millions of times. He whom he forgives he also cleanses and makes whole. The miracle of healing always goes with the miracle of forgiveness. The one attests the truth of the other. Every true conversion involves both miracles; the sinner is forgiven and the sinner is made whole. "They were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." No wonder, for tremendous truths that the world had never heard before, were enunciated in that city of Capernaum. Jesus forgave sins. Jesus made himself God. Jesus attested his claims by his works. He has been making these claims and proving them ever since.

Have we listened to his claims? Have we accepted his forgiveness? Have we been healed of the paralysis of sin? Have we ever brought our sin-sick friends to Christ for

healing? These are questions that concern us as much as the paralytic and his four friends. Sin is the same. Forgiveness is the same. Healing is the same. The Forgiver and the Healer are the same. To us all he is waiting to-day to say: "Child, thy sins be forgiven thee." To us all he is waiting to give the power that will enable us to testify to the all-sufficiency of his grace and the might of redeeming love, that others may glorify God and find in him forgiveness and healing, pardon and redemption.

Francis E. Clark.

JESUS AND THE SABBATH

MATT. 12: 1-13

"For the son of man is lord of the sabbath."—Matt. 12: 8.

It is reported that just before his death Renan made the remark, "I fear that the work of the twentieth century will consist in taking out of the rubbish basket a multitude of excellent ideas which the nineteenth century has heedlessly thrown into it." Let us hope this may come true with regard to the keeping of our holy day, for within the last hundred years much of its sacredness has been carelessly thrown away, and inevitably much of its blessing. If we are to recover these, it will be through learning from Him who is Lord of the Sabbath.

The irrepressible conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees was certain to bring the Sabbath question early into debate. They had turned God's day of holy rest and joy into a time of intolerable restrictions, which bred in turn demoralizing hypocritical evasions. Our Lord could never endure this, and "lighted early his Sabbath lamp of mercy." To break away the traditions, while yet reenforcing the spiritual obligations, required the clearest intelligence and deepest spiritual force, with courage ready to face a relentless wrath. In the two incidents of the lesson we find him indeed the Master. His hungry disciples had plucked heads of grain, which the Pharisees declared was a kind of reaping, and rubbed them in their hands, which was threshing or winnowing or grinding; these were labor, forbidden and offensive. That they should have done this,

and without his rebuke, condemned both them and him as violators of the Law, liable to official punishment whose extreme form was stoning. The Lord's reply to the charge was at once simple and profound and unanswerable. He begins with a historical instance in which David, their great hero, had used even the displaced shew-bread to satisfy hunger. Next, from the Law itself he proved that, granting these acts were labor, labor for the sake of religion was sanctioned, with the majestic declaration that he was greater than the temple and therefore toil to satisfy hunger incurred in his service was sacred. Then from the prophets he drew the principle that mercy, being the very heart and purpose of the ceremonial sacrifice, was more than the sacrifice itself. The cleverest scribe could not answer his argument, and the dullest could not mistake his astounding claim. In the other incident, probably on the following Sabbath, he fell back on the common instincts of humanity and their own conduct to show how shallow and hypocritical was their reasoning, and left them with their case thrown out of court by illustrious precedent, legal sanction, the spirit of religion, and their own practice.

That was a striking scene in the synagogue. Here was the crippled man, whose misery was of no interest to the Pharisees except as a trap to catch the Holy One. They may have brought him there for the purpose; at all events they knew that for Jesus to see distress was to relieve it. The Lord calls him into the center before them all. Close around press the eager, malicious faces of the plotters, with the excited throng outside: man's distress, heaven's mercy, hypocritical hatred, an anxious world. In the Saviour's heart anger, grief, love and authority are mingled. "What man, of you," a poor man with a single sheep, will not lift it out of a pit, though it be on the Sabbath? "How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! . . . Stretch forth thy hand"; and the withered right hand lifts,

restored whole as the other. They cannot refute his argument; they cannot denounce his act, for there is no hint of labor done in applying a remedy to the diseased member, not even a touch, only the word of command. With nothing else left for them they go out filled with madness, and counsel with their old enemies the Herodians how to destroy him. The first deliberate plot to kill the Christ of God arose from his determination to restore the Sabbath from human perversions to its divine worth and beauty. He left established four principles of observing the Sabbath: It is of divine origin; it was reaffirmed and perpetuated by Christ; it is for all mankind; it is to be understood and kept according to his authoritative interpretation.

I. The divine origin of the Sabbath. "The sabbath was made for man." He did not invent it. It was not a deduction from his experience, a statesmanlike provision for his prosperity, the kindly gift of philanthropy, a sacred fruit of priestly care for souls. All its ministrations were divinely planned. God made it for man and gave it to him before he could discover for himself its precious value. Men might come of themselves to know that they must honor parents, must not kill or steal or lie or commit adultery, that coveting was dangerous. With something of heaven's aid they might conceivably rise to the worship of one divine Being. But to take out one day in seven from their work and pleasure and consecrate it to God was a command that only he himself could declare at the outset, leaving for them to prove—as long centuries have proved—that to rescue just this proportion of time for holy things is blessing to man's soul, his home, his business, all his social and civil life. It is a condition of the highest civilization, brings heaven to earth, and fits the children of earth for the heaven above. Note that this is the fourth commandment. We approach it by way of a first, second,

third. Told that God is the deliverer of his people, we are bidden to worship him alone, with reverence of thought and speech. Then comes the word, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." It is vitally connected with the three which establish our relation to him. It is as vitally connected with those which follow, describing our duty to men. You might as well think to understand the spectrum while leaving out the blue or yellow as to secure right obedience to the rest of the decalogue without the fourth commandment. All the ten are to teach us "holiness towards God, self-control toward ourselves, justice toward our neighbor;" and this one recognizes and aids these demands in a positive institution, whose fit observance gives heart and will and power for the duties which make up true living.

II. Christ reaffirmed and perpetuated the Sabbath. We know positively his relation to the law of Moses, that he came to fulfil, not to destroy. The Sabbath which men so greatly need, the Saviour of men will not destroy. We know his practice, that he went into the synagogue on that day and took part in its services, pitifully degraded as its worship had become. The Gospels give no instance of his violating a single real obligation of the Law. Just because the Sabbath was so sacred and so essential, he stripped from it the false traditions and restored it to man for its holy mission. Given first to the Jews, a peculiar race with a peculiar ritual, he delared it was for all the world. "The sabbath was made for man," for mankind, since there is not a race or a century but needs its characteristic blessings which no other institution has ever brought. The presence of this command in the decalogue, every other requirement of which is moral, universal and perpetual, leads us to expect its recognition and perpetuation by the Lord of the Sabbath, whose mission it was to draw men closer to God and to their fellows. His

boldness in rescuing it from pharisaic abuse shows his estimate of its value. Breaking off the encrusting clay, he did not shatter the diamond. The Jewish sacrifices are gone, for the great sacrifice of the cross has been made. Robed and mitred priesthood is abolished, for all believers are now kings and priests unto God. But worship, rest, communion with heaven and heavenly ministrations on earth, are newly enjoined upon us with a holier and tenderer sanction than Sinai could give. Christ's Church has never been without its holy day. The first disciples kept the old Sabbath, and not until the day of resurrection drew to itself the sacredness of the earlier observance was the Jewish obligation released. The Sabbath did not die; it was translated that it should not see death. The soul of it was immortal, and its resurrection body displaced, as it were, particle by particle, the temporary form until it was raised new in Christ Jesus.

III. The Sabbath is to be kept according to Christ's authoritative interpretation. Our Lord had no controversy with the Pharisees whether one day should be kept holy, only how it should be kept. They had drilled themselves to fancy that what the Almighty wanted was a punctilious observance of petty restrictions. He knew that what God wanted was holiness and mercy. The Sabbath for man must be for poor as well as rich; for working men and housewives; for the half-grown child stunted by too early tasks of poverty; for desolate boarding-houses as for homes; for tired servants as for the mistress of the mansion. Ease, pleasure, luxury, are apt to teach forgetfulness of God; drudgery and care unlit with recreation, servile toils ever shackled with commands, depress the soul and dull its sense of the divine. The true Sabbath sobers the gay and strong and lifts up the lowly and downcast. "The sabbath was made for man." For which man? Not

the one who multiplies his delights by multiplying the toil of others. Not for the tempter who makes labor's leisure the opportunity for his spells. On this day of all others shut the door upon the saloon, the gambling den and house of shame. Shut the door on care and toil and selfish effort, to open it upon peace and rest and divine affections. Work and worship belong ever together; six days shalt thou labor, but once in a week the balance is shifted; God and heaven have the right of way. Earth's damages are to be repaired. Broken hearts, distracting doubts, pangs of conscience, fears of death, demand space to find God and tarry with him. Pitiful as was our Lord towards the hurts of men's bodies, it was their souls' diseases which moved him most. Healings were but symbols of his cure for souls. He sanctions slight labor to relieve hunger; shall he not give opportunity for a starving spirit to receive the bread of life? He restores a withered hand; will he not revive a crippled faith, a paralyzed love? Gladly sending the helpless to their service, the sick to their households, will he not account it the highest ministry of consecrated hours to bring peace to repenting souls and fill up the mansions in the Father's house?

And Christ's holy day will not be for self alone, even the highest self. It looks in upon the sick, the lonely, the mourning, with ministrations learned in hours of worship and secret communing with the Master. It seeks eagerly that highest mercy in which the risen Redeemer went about on the world's first "Lord's Day," opening the Scriptures, banishing doubt, reviving hope, and reaffirming tried and drooping faith. "The sabbath was made for man," man was made for God; and the mission of the Sabbath is always the mission of the birth of Bethlehem, the teachings and healings of Galilee, the sacrifice on Calvary, the resurrection and ascension, the outpouring of Pentecost—to win men to become true children of their Father

which is in heaven and true followers of their divine Redeemer.

The ultimate responsibility for preserving the holy day rests upon Christians. Whatever others do, they can keep it. The spirit and practise of Christians must always represent the high-water mark of the community. If the Church grows careless the world will not be reverent. The ultimate reason why the holy day is made less holy in these times is not that men are persuaded that Christ abolished its obligation or depreciated its sacredness, but that men do not like to retain God in their thoughts. They do not joy in him; they are not at home with him; they neglect or dread him; they contemn his ways and want none of his highest blessings. Christians should joy in their Lord and glory in the God of their salvation. When they call his day a delight, and the holy of the Lord honorable, then may they hope to move a worldly world to esteem and seek its blessings.

Charles M. Southgate.

HEARERS AND DOERS OF THE WORD

MATT. 7: 21-29

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," etc.

It is not altogether easy, although most important, to distinguish genuine piety from its counterfeits. Our Saviour recognized the difficulty and uttered the words of the lesson to show the grounds of distinction and to aid us in judging in regard to character. Are we real Christians or are we deceiving ourselves? When is piety genuine and when is it a pretence?

Our Saviour's method is that of elimination. He casts out one test after another as unsatisfactory till at last he reaches one that is final and conclusive. Let us follow him through the process.

Genuine piety, he declares, *is not proved by professions.* It is not enough to say "Lord, Lord." Words are cheap and flow easily from the lips, especially when they may serve instead of wearisome efforts and persistent self-denial. The Mohammedan robber is loud in his vociferations that Allah is God and Mohammed the prophet of Allah, but he remains a robber none the less. Even in Christian America people are sometimes loud-voiced in the prayer-meeting whose methods in Wall Street will not bear investigation.

We are tempted, however, to take men at their own estimate and accept their professions at par. It is not always easy to probe a man's heart, nor is it agreeable to doubt

his word. But experience teaches us that to know human nature we must have something more than a profession. Words are well enough as far as they go. They are guide-boards to suggest a road to be followed, but mischief or ignorance may have misplaced them, and whether the path they suggest is the right one or not is still to be proved. The world to-day is rightly suspicious of cant. It cannot endure a loud show of professions or a smooth and glib flow of pious phrases. It is justly suspicious that effusive piety is no piety at all. With the spread of Christianity and its constantly growing popularity, there is more and more a temptation to simulate it. When to be a Christian involved contempt, if not persecution, one found no advantage in cant and such a name as Praise-God Barebones, so offensive to our ears, might have been a sincere expression of pious feeling in the days of King Charles. But to-day the temptation to sanctimoniousness has immeasurably increased and consequently we dislike the overdrawn ecclesiastical phraseology of two hundred and fifty years ago. Language and style have changed in consequence and even the simple, saving clause "God willing," once so common in letters and pulpit notices, and ordinary conversation, has dropped out of use. "Why do you not say 'God willing' like a Christian?" recently inquired a friend. "Because," was the reply, "since I am known as a Christian, it is understood that I have the limitation 'God willing' always in mind and I do not propose to cast a doubt on my piety by wearing this tag on my speech any more that I would cast a doubt on my truthfulness by asserting that I am not lying." To prove piety, there must be something else than words.

It is plain that our Lord means to teach here that religion cannot be divorced from morality. There has been a fatal misconception among men on this point, especially in past centuries. Nearly all the religions which

men have devised independently of revelation, lay their emphasis upon satisfying God and ignore any ethical relations to fellow men. A certain number of genuflections, a prayer carpet or string of beads, or even a prayer-wheel turned by water, rich donations to a heathen temple or a Christian cathedral, have served as a cover to the most outrageous deeds. In time gone by, and to some extent to-day, men and women have found justification for withdrawing from all the obligations of their natural life, for disregarding duties not only to the world at large but even to the dearest inmates of their homes, to those nearest akin, for whose lives and welfare they are responsible, that they might shut themselves up to commune with God. This is not true religion and no one thus giving himself up to words and professions and neglecting the every-day deeds of human obligation, is living a life pleasing to God.

We might easily reason on this basis that if words will not serve, then surely deeds must. In fact, our Lord had just said, previous to the teaching of this passage, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and in the passage before us our Saviour commends the doer of Christ's sayings. We must not, however, be blinded on this point. A careful distinction is to be made here. *Deeds are not of themselves and apart from their motive a reliable test.* This was what our Lord meant when he said that many who claim to be his because they had prophesied, cast out demons and done seeming miracles in his name, would be rejected as none of his. One can deceive by deeds as well as by words. A life may be hypocritical. Many deeds, admirable in themselves, may be prompted by wrong motives and done in a wrong spirit. In Christ's time, as before and after, were miraculous gifts which could sometimes be simulated. One might call herself a prophetess, like the mysterious woman symbolically called Jezebel in the Book of Revelation. Others might go about the country as exorcists, claiming

to cast out devils in the name of Jesus; while yet others, like Elymas the sorcerer, might withstand the truth by pretended wonders. Nor do we need to go back nineteen centuries to find these pretenders. We have to-day a so-called Christian Science, which, as has repeatedly been said, is neither Christian nor scientific, a so-called Spiritualism, which has no spirituality about it, a wild Adventism which prophesies marvelous events and waits for them in ascension robes, in vain. All these and similar claims to miraculous power prove nothing. In fact all show-deeds, like show-words, only awaken suspicion. Ostentation is never genuine. An extravagant display of diamonds leads to the thought that the rent is unpaid or else that the diamonds are paste.

One of the most profound and pungent utterances of this generation regarding religion was made awhile since by Captain A. H. Mahan of the United States Navy. We have long known Captain Mahan to be our ablest writer on naval matters. He now steps forth as a writer on religious themes and instantly commands the attention of the world. Before a religious body in New York City he has stated that there is a marked decline in religion at the present day and that the cause is to be found in the fact that the first and great commandment,—to love the Lord our God with all the heart and soul and mind and strength,—has been relegated to a secondary place and, instead, all the emphasis is laid on the command to love one's neighbor as one's self. Active benevolent deeds to fellow men, he avers, have taken the place of personal piety. The point he makes has been widely discussed since he set it forth and is generally considered to be well taken. It is difficult to preserve an equilibrium of duties and we are apt to oscillate from one extreme to the other. As we have just considered, men formerly while worshiping God neglected man. It is probably true that to-day the

pendulum has swung to the other extreme, an extreme of humanitarianism. Unquestionably we should love our fellow man, but it is equally true that such love is empty,—a puffball,—unless the outgrowth of love to God, and it is equally true that we must be centered in God and in him live, move and have our being, or else our life is valueless.

Tests fails, then, which are based merely on professions or merely on deeds. There is also one other test which may deceive the man himself, if no one else. It is possible for one to have *an intellectual acceptance of the truth* and yet not have the root of the matter in him. He is what Christ calls a "hearer of the word," but not a doer. He listens to the truth and hears it gladly. He is convinced by it. He yields an intellectual acquiescence to it. He calls himself a Christian because he no longer worships idols or accepts Buddhism or because he recognizes Christ as divine. But does that make him a Christian in the real sense? Not at all. To be sure, language has come to recognize as "Christian" all who accept Christianity as true. We say in a loose way, there are 500,000,000 Christians in the world. We mean by this simply that one third of the population of the globe now acknowledge Christianity to be the true religion. We do not mean that they have genuine piety and have entered the kingdom of heaven. We simply mean that the system of belief that centers about Christ is regarded by them in some vague and impersonal way to be true. It may and probably has modified to some extent their mode of life and principles of action, but it has not become with them in any true sense a religion, that is, it does not bind them to God. It is a philosophy, possibly a code of ethics, but nothing more. It does not penetrate the heart. It does not become the principle of life. It is a case of hearing,—as the phrase puts it, it goes in at one ear and out at the other.

This brings us to the true test. The real Christian, Christ says, the man of genuine piety, is *he who not only hears the word but does it.* He does not stop with hearing, but he goes on to do what he hears he ought to do. He does not stop with a declaration of his piety, but proves it by a consistent life. He does not make a show of doing a few ostentatious deeds that are devoid of genuine Christian purpose, but his whole life day by day, without thought of display, is an effort to do God's will and a consistent endeavor to obey Christ. The test of piety is conformity to the divine will, and this conformity is not in a few sporadic cases, but in the steady current of one's life. Such a life is the fruit of a genuine piety within, and "by their fruits ye shall know them." This is what our Saviour means by saying that he that doeth the will of his Father in heaven shall enter into the kingdom.

Now it is to be observed that sooner or later in every man's life comes a time of testing. The rains descend, the floods come, the winds blow and beat on the structure of a lifetime. Does it then stand or fall? That depends on how it is built. God places us here on earth for two purposes, for training and for trial. If we submit aright to training, we can stand the trial. No man knows when or how temptation will sweep in upon him and beat against him and test his character. Naturally, it comes more often in early life than later and it is to be supposed that as one goes on through life, meets and defeats one temptation after another and thus grows strong, temptation will have less and less power over him. It might almost be thought that under this process we would become at advanced age absolutely safe against temptation and certain to stand under all circumstances. But this is something we do not know. Temptations are of almost infinite variety, and nearly every one who is not protected by divine grace has some weak point in his character, like Achilles' heel, where

the poisoned arrow may enter. Here is no doubt the explanation of the terrible fall of some who have stood high before the world and have borne an unsullied reputation for years. The temptation to which they were vulnerable did not come for long, but when it did come, it was a landslide on the mountain side and the crash was great and the seam in the mountain horrible. We can recall within our own memory the case of generals, statesmen, professional men, men trusted implicitly in business, who had built up a great name only to make the disaster of their fall the greater. Who of us, knowing of these unexpected cases of ruin, does not tremble at the possibilities in himself?

Where, then, is the protection? Our Lord tells us figuratively to found our house on a rock and then we shall be safe. What does he mean by this? Evidently the language refers first of all to character. We must be doers of the word, and not hearers only, and as we have seen, doers not simply of what we may justify, but of the revealed will of God, doers not in a mere perfunctory way but as the settled practice of one's life. In other words, our protection against the blasts of temptation must be formed in a consecrated and consistent Christian life. Here is a rock foundation. When we erect a building or raise the piers of a great bridge or construct a dam to withstand the floods, we must dig down to rock bottom and build up on that. This is what we must do in our daily life. Our conduct must not be impulsive, but every act must be based on a firm and consistent Christian purpose lying deep in the soul. We speak of a consistent Christian life. This invariably begins with a paramount controlling purpose or choice, made after profound deliberation and made for eternity, a choice to serve God and to follow Christ in God's ways. Such a choice to serve God the Old Testament saints had in mind when one of them said, "Choose you this day

whom ye will serve . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" and when another said, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed."

When once this choice is made and becomes controlling, every other act of life falls into conformity to it and obedience to God's will becomes a habit. The long succession of decisions, all shaped by a fundamental desire to serve God, are in time unconsciously made in the right way, and so are crystallized into what we call disposition, or, better yet, character.

But we have thus far indicated only the human side and the least important side of what Christ meant by a rock foundation. When Christ said to Peter, "Thou art Peter (Petra, a rock) and upon this rock I will build my church," he had two thoughts in mind: the rock foundation of an earnest Christian purpose and the solidity which came to that purpose in being founded on Christ; for Christ's remark was called out by the confession Peter had just made in the words, "Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God." So here, the rock foundation on which we may stand and not be moved by storms of temptation is not merely our own firm resolution, but a resolution based on a recognition of dependence on Christ. Christ is revealed as the Rock of Ages and our Christian purpose must be embedded by faith in him. When once the Christian purpose of a devout believer rests firmly on the Lord Jesus as his Saviour and his God, he is absolutely safe. There is no power on earth or in hell that can break him down.

Addison P. Foster.

JESUS CALMS THE STORM

MARK 4: 35-41

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still."—Ps. 107: 29.

Two questions sound in the hush of the great calm when the winds ceased to whip the scant rigging and the waves grew quiet at the gunwales and the Master's voice was heard talking to them in the stillness and the dark on the little boat. One question was uttered by him: "Your faith—where is your faith? why are ye so fearful?" The other is spoken in low tones among the men whose struggle with wind and wave was now ended: "What manner of man is this?" About these two questions our thoughts on this lesson center, for they bear on our relations to our Lord and on his relation to our lives.

Mark says that they set sail in the evening of that day which Jesus had made unusually impressive and memorable. How? It was the day when for the first time, as it seems, he made special use of the parable. Think what a day it must have been when out of the meditations of that brooding heart, his lips began to utter in the morning air of Galilee's beach, as he sat in a fisher's boat, those "earthly stories with a heavenly meaning"! In the new vividness of this way of putting his teachings, their hearts were roused to ask for explanations of these stories. Then they saw in all one special theme shining in the light of their Master's clear knowledge of spiritual things. All of the stories were about the kingdom of God. They showed that

it is the same in its ways through all the ranges of it, material and spiritual. The same principles hold in fields of grain, in tree life, in commercial methods, in household ways, in the tasks of seagoing fishermen—the same in such things of the outer life of men as in men's hearts when things eternal are concerned. God's kingdom runs throughout, the same principles hold good, faith works in the face of obstacles; in the end good results. In these parables the august, age-long problem of the moral order is broken in the prisms of common life into rays simple and beautiful.

Their hearts must have been enkindled with thoughts of the kingdom of God, and the Master's mind must have been glowing with the things he had been interpreting, when the sun dropping behind the hills of Galilee touched with evening light the little sail they hoisted and tinted the clouds gliding above them as their bow began to toy with the familiar waters and make for the other side. So it was, that, in the suggestive words of Luke, "as they sailed he fell asleep." Ah, in those words one can hear the sound of the lapping wash of the waters and feel the freshness of the breeze and even get a sense of the deep-breathed slumber of the tired Man of Galilee! The kingdom of his Father held him in holy security of mind and body.

Thoughts of the kingdom of God must have overhung the minds of the disciples as they began to watch the darkening sky. Perplexing questions concerning the kingdom, which the day had raised in their minds, must have stirred their thoughts as they handled ropes or plied oars and watched the rising wind flurrying the waters, till the daylight left the whitecaps and at length through the dark they heard the billows break and boom.

So it is that we can see the full meaning to Master and men of the scene when Jesus, awakened by the dismayed

fishermen, said "Peace" to the winds and "Be still" to the waves and "Why are ye so fearful? where is your faith?" to his disciples. It was a parable in action, continuing the teaching of the day, bearing on the same theme, showing the same truths, that God's kingdom runs through all, that faith is to overcome difficulties, that good is the result of its working. It was the same truth in terms of the sea which a Christlike spirit has sung in the lines,

> "I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond his love and care."

God's kingdom means God's care; God's care means man's trust; man's trust means fearless peace and kingly confidence. The repose of Jesus when they awoke him exemplifies all this. This is shown forth in his immediate inquiry as to why their fear is so great and their faith so little. It is impressed by the sign he gave them when he spoke peace to wind and wave.

This miracle is to be viewed not simply as an act of rescue for that little boat's company. Its warrant and its meaning lie in the lesson he was that day teaching and that night illustrating. By that teaching he was coming to the rescue of all souls, in all storms, all alarm, all helplessness in all the seas of human life. He does not, indeed, undertake to hush all winds and lull all waves of the world, but he does set his wisdom and power to accomplish for us all that which is a much nobler benefaction—to allay all fear and speak peace to the spirits of us all, let billows roll as they will. I would be a soul that is undaunted in its own peaceful confidence in God, whose I am and whom I serve, whatever winds drive my bark, whatever waters threaten to engulf me, rather than a soul that feels safe only in placid seas; I would be a soul dependent for its peace not

on the allaying of the waves that rise against me, but on the keeping of the God who rises for me.

> "Above the voices of many waters
> The mighty breakers of the sea,
> The Lord on high is mighty."

This is the inmost meaning of the whole occurrence out there in the night on the sea. Once this is seized upon the scene can no longer be shut in to far Galilee and that night in the early years of the first century and that group of peasants. It becomes transferable and reproducible throughout the world and the centuries, wherever men face hardships and call Jesus Master.

But did not Jesus work a miracle then such as he does not for us? He did a deed on Galilee that night which men then counted and ever since have called a miracle. But dare we go further and agree that such acts are not done for us? Let us ponder that question carefully.

In our day we are seeing the miracles of Jesus in a new and fuller light. We view them as *revealing* what the Christ was rather than as *proving* that Jesus was the Christ; as symbols expressing the quality and range of his nature and life and mission, rather than as proofs that he had such a nature and mission.

"The power to work miracles," as Principal Fairbairn says, "could never prove its possessor to be a person so extraordinary as we conceive Christ to be; but Christ once conceived to be the extraordinary person we believe him to be, miracles become to him both natural and necessary. They complete the picture of the divine goodness he manifests, show that its action in the physical is in essential harmony with its action in the moral sphere."

With this view of Jesus' miracles how can we say that he does no such acts of mercy and power in our lives? If such a one as Jesus, to whom the miracles were a fitting ex-

pression of himself, still lives; if we believe as we say in the universal creed of Christendom that "He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father;" if we believe his solemn word, "Lo, I am with you all the days," then as surely as he is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever," so surely are such deeds of mercy and power fitting expressions of himself now as then. And if this is so we must insulate ourselves from the currents of his earthward-flowing sympathy and activity to believe that his benefactions are not among us now as surely as when he walked through the towns and sailed the little Sea of Galilee.

"But where are the miracles now?" we are ready to ask. For answer ponder this question: *Who knows what your life might be any given day other than what it is but for the acts of mercy and power of the Lord who hears prayer?*

Who shall say to what extent the ills of life have been abated for himself and those for whom he prays, or perils escaped, or needs filled, or disabilities removed, or evil powers cast out, or life restored when the bands of death were fastened beyond man's removing, whether we knew it or not—who shall say to what extent these things take place in response to our prayers and in direct expression of the abundant life of mercy and power which is in Jesus our living Lord? Can our short sight by any microscope or telescope of human wisdom tell off to completeness even the natural causes or cures of life's ills? How dare we presume, then, to pronounce against the work of an unseen Hand if we believe that God is?

The man whose table is bountifully filled year in and year out, hardly realizes the wonder, the blessed mystery of bodily nourishment, so constant is the working of that mystery in his life and the lives of his heart circle. But let famine come, let hunger demonstrate what the absence of food means; then let the man bring home to his ema-

ciated wife and children food for a single meal. The mystery of bodily nourishment, the joy of food, are seen then, and that which was common when it was constant is now seen to be sufficiently marvelous and beneficent to stand out in their appreciation and memory with the distinctness of miracle. What might our lives be if there had been no Christ heart above us, no Christ hand with us, no constancy of mercy and power at work in our lives? Because we do not realize his acts by sense perception is no warrant for our disallowing those acts. You do not realize that the sun is performing the stupendous wonder of wheeling this planet on which you dwell around an orbit which is so adjusted that it brings you and yours the beneficence of the changing seasons. That the sun is doing so with a swing of a million and a half miles through space each day of your life, you certainly do not realize, the marvel is so constant, the appeal of the little planet through the prayer of gravitation is so steadfast, the response of the sun through the power of the transcendent forces within itself is so incessant. Yet as these words are written the radiancy of gracious spring has broken in our New England skies, robins are chirruping on the lawn, buds are peeping out of the bare branches of trees. The sweet face of a little yellow crocus was lifted through the dead grass beside the parsonage walk yesterday and children ran to bend happy faces above the tiny first-born of the maternal summer. Fields and orchards will be laden soon and the miracle of a transformed world will then be complete. Then at least we shall realize that all through the long New England winter the wonder of the sun's work was put forth, and the earth was held and guided and turned until this demonstration of the spring and summer should make the wonder-working manifest.

So is it in the life of us men. There are winter times with blight and cold and fruitlessness and storm for us all;

times when we do not see that the wonder-workings of the care divine are on us. But they are on us, definitely, "all the days." The sun was not only bringing the earth around all winter to a time when spring should break forth; but the coal you burned to expel the winter's cold that same sun had caused to grow in ancient ages in its original vegetation; the wood that enclosed the comforts of your home and shut out the driving storm, that sun had caused to grow in recent years; day by day all the winter through the sun sent light to cheer your rooms while snows lay deep and winds were wild; and day by day the sun purified the air and sterilized germs of disease and so made it possible for you to baffle sickness and nurse your loved one back to health. The sun was working for your good all the time. Even so our Lord is ever working in us and in our lives to will and to do of his good pleasure. His goodness is so constant that we do not realize the marvel. Mount Chocorua in the Sandwich range of the White Mountains is some two thousand feet lower than Mount Washington; but the general and entire elevation of the Presidential Range is uplifted all around Mount Washington; and I have stood at view-points where the bald, low peaks of Chocorua impressed me more than the vaster heights of the monarch of all those mountains encircled by his royal company. So do the miracles of our Lord's earthly ministry stand out in our view, while the greater things done in our behalf stand in majesty unrealized amid all the high ranges of experience in the lives of men who call Jesus Lord and Master. If you could know what the past week would have been for you if the working of Christ's goodness had been shut out, who can say what towering and massive exhibitions of what the Lord has done for you would rise before your eyes?

"Because I live, ye shall live also," Jesus said; ye shall live the better, more abundant life which he came to

earth to open and reigns in heaven to achieve for you and all men. Do not watch for special evidences of his hand in your life that so you may know that he is; rather speak thus: I know that He is, and what he is, and therefore I know his hand is in my life working for my good, whether I can discern it and trace its working in the tangle of things human or not. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings,"—ah, what a trinity of aspiration is there! Often we have to take these steps in the reverse order. But what of that if only we come to "know him," and find him in our boat, mastering our hearts and, when he will, the storms of our lives also?

William Allen Knight.

DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

MATTHEW 14: 1-12

"At that season Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore do these powers work in him."

By a singular trick of mind, the names of two very unlike characters are associated in this lesson as belonging to the same person. To Herod, with his guilty memory, Jesus seemed the murdered John returned to life again, with even greater power than before. "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;" the most immoral people being often the most credulous, and the most easily duped. As a matter of fact, scarcely any two persons in history were ever more unlike, at least in their more obvious qualities.

John the Baptist was a prophet of denunciation. His target was sin; his weapon the moral law; his method warning or threatening. He met and bore down his antagonists by the tremendous weight of his moral indignation and judgment, in the way that ancient men-at-arms sought to crush one another. "It is not lawful for thee to have her," is a sentence worthy of a place among the greater utterances of Israel's former men. In his origin, manner of appearance, and the style and force of his message, he reminds us of the old prophetic stock. Mysterious, fearless, uncompromising, as much "alone, alone, alone," as his great prototype, Elijah, he met the most notorious evils of his day with the deep sense of being the messenger of the Almighty, and in the end shared the

most desperate fate any man's courage can invite. The value of such a lesson is not likely to be overestimated, and its frequent recollection is worthy of us all.

But a natural question in the connection is, What has such a story to do in this place, and what relation does John's ministry of denunciation bear to the gentle gospel of Him, who, as recorded in the preceding lesson, calmed the storm of the lake, and appears, in the following lesson, feeding five thousand people in the desert with only a handful of resources? Amid such gracious scenes the blood-red martyrdom of John stands out with the contrast of a dash of red poppies in a field of golden grain; as an Old Testament horror in New Testament times. But let us not judge hastily, for the Old Testament is not so much a record of a period of time, as of a state of mind and morals which may occur at any time; and for such a state, whenever it exists, Elijahs, Jeremiahs, Jonahs and John the Baptists are needed, and God sends them.

The city of Tiberias in Jesus' day was as monstrously wicked as Samaria in the days of Ahab. It was another Sodom a little farther up the Jordan waters, ruled by a prince before whom "no woman's honor was safe, no man's life secure;" a man dissolute, weak, voluptuous, yoked in marriage to a woman still worse than himself; and as Elijah was sent to denounce Ahab, John was commissioned to denounce Herod. Both prophets were in their proper places as judges of public and venial sin.

If the royal court John condemned had truly represented the moral life of the land it ruled, no other gospel would have been possible at that time, or until conditions changed. But there were thousands of people about Tiberias, and in the neighboring regions, who had not been corrupted by it, people sincerely doing their duty as they understood it in times when "there was no open vision," earnestly looking for the coming of a deliverer,

"distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd," for whom another sort of gospel was needed. It was to them Jesus brought a much gentler ministry, one sympathetic, appreciative, dealing in beatitudes; because the people were sad, depressed, misled, and overborne with hardship and disappointment.

There was need for both types, as there ever is. For human life is a large affair, and no one gospel can reach all phases of it. The wicked and rebellious, the penitent, the well-disposed who are doing right as they understand it, and those whose hearts are burning with enlightened passion, all dwell side by side in every generation, and will continue to do so as long as human facts remain as they are now. The gospel of God is no one thing; it is everything, the whole will of God for the whole need of man; and those who would minister it wholesomely must have many things to say, and great wisdom in "handling aright the word of truth." Surely our Lord's talks to his disciples who loved him, and to his enemies who opposed him, were as varied, and directed to as many different ends, as all of us together can imitate in a lifetime. It is for this reason, perhaps, that these strongly contrasted stories are associated here, that we may be reminded more forcibly how varied God's message is to the world, according as he finds it, and how many forms the preaching of any age must take if it is to reach all classes.

Applying this to our own time there are, in general, four Christian messages which are important, and which need to be preached in some manner now. Perhaps we may not all regard them as equally necessary, or as equally central in the Christian scheme, if that word is a proper one to use in the connection. But they are all related to certain great fundamental and persistent human experiences which need to be dealt with in a plain and vigorous way. Naturally they take their form from different

views of the nature of man, and his habits as a moral being; for all proposals to save men must, in the nature of the case, be based on what it is supposed they need to be saved from.

For instance, there is a view of the need of man which is based on the belief that the race is fallen; that one and all are in a state of condemnation from which they are totally unable to save themselves, and that salvation from this condition must be procured by some one who is not a member of the race, but who is in close sympathy with it, and who, at the same time, is in such a relation to God that he can take this great load of sin on himself and bear it in our stead. This is the familiar doctrine of salvation by substitution, and no one who knows thoroughly the feelings and deeper needs of the human heart will doubt that there are instances, and many of them, when this view of Christ's work for the world needs to be preached. Whether the doctrine of "total depravity" is believed as formerly, or not, is scarcely to the point. The point is that, whatever our views about the original fall of man, there presses upon the heart sometimes such a deep sense of the utter wrongness of things as a whole, that it seems impossible for the mind to think of this great curse of wrong being atoned for, or removed, in any other way than by its remission by some mighty Saviour, whose pity, love and strength are divine, and equal to so great a task. But if such a Saviour did so remit it, it must have been done at some particular time; and if he did it once for all, and for all men, then the happy song is true:

"Jesus paid it all,
All to him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow."

And sometimes there is no sweeter assurance possible

for the convicted heart, nor one which so completely meets its need in the agonies of repentance or remorse. Certainly, there are men and women in every community who need this gospel; for whom the more ethical forms of faith are far too indistinct, impossible, or slow in their operation. To say to them that the future is still theirs, and that God's grace will keep them in it if they put their trust in him, does not meet the case. Their past holds their attention, and the message of the gracious forgiveness of their sins is the only gospel which can satisfy. Whatever we may think of surgery, or however much we may hope not to experience it, or may sincerely believe that it ought not to be necessary, there are times of illness when nothing else will do; times when he who delays loses, or risks losing, a life. It is much the same with the usefulness of the doctrine of the substitution of Christ for our sins, and that quite apart from the theological questions involved. If we have not felt this, others have, and through faith in it have found peace for their souls which no other form of the truth could give.

But there are others who do not believe in a fallen race, or that this world is under a curse for its sins, in view of all we know now as to its probable origin and history, who still feel deeply that men at large have gone far from God's will concerning them, and need his forgiveness far more than anything else, in order that they may recover peace with him. It is not so much with them a matter how long the race has been going wrong, as it is that it is daily going wrong, heaping up known and willing sin enough to blacken the very sky over our heads; that each generation is making a fall on its own account, for which some settlement must be made before a better life can be begun. And the importance of this conviction increases when, alongside this persistent and wilful sinning, the claim is pressed that we are all God's children from our birth up,

and that he loves and cares for us daily. Surely, if we are the children of God by nature, and his Spirit dwells in us constantly, we ought to see more distinct signs of it than are obvious in many people's conduct. Of course, if the older theory be true that we are all children of the devil until such time as we are, in the familiar language, "born again," it is natural that sin should have a large place in human history. But that those who by nature are of God's family from the beginning, should do such evil as is wide-spread in every community, is a matter for serious anxiety and repentance, and for such preaching as fits the facts. It is no kindness to the world to deal out gentle and soothing platitudes in times when even morally minded men, to say nothing of a high and holy God, are shocked by the baseness and moral insensibility which prevails about them until it seems as though a ministry of the old woe-breathing prophets was needed again, and ought to be instituted. It was to such conditions the veteran John the Baptist was sent; and wherever such conditions exist, or ever shall exist, the messenger of God, if he be a true and fearless messenger, will go and do likewise, even at the price of his peace or his life. This is no more nor less than the fitness of things in the moral realm.

But however important these presentations of the gospel are, they are clearly not the whole of it, and perhaps not even the heart of it, since the central fact of human life is not sin, but son. Sin, however common or flagrant it may be, is only incidental in human experience, while sonship is eternal. "The son abideth for ever;" but sin shall one day be no more. And there are many who feel that, considering man's nature and history, and how human it is to err, the right mood in which to approach the sin of the world is that of the pity with which the Son of God came, the love, the patience, the grace which clothed him, and that the gospel of the beatitudes should have

the foremost place in the ministry of those who would imitate Him whom they most do follow. It is said that when the morose Carlyle would take the persistent optimism out of our American Emerson, he took him down to a groveling part of London and, showing him the sin and misery there, asked him, "Now, man, do you believe in the devil?" to which the great apostle of faith in the human stock, whatever its immediate failings, replied, "Oh, no; all these people seem to me to be only part of the great world, and I think they are doing their work very satisfactorily." This, truly, is a mood of which it is easy to find samples in the Gospels, if not appearing much in the theology of the past century; a mood which is being reenforced steadily by all we are learning of the origin of man, of what he has had to contend against, and is still encountering, in the endeavor to "find himself, and make sure of himself." There is truly much of weakness, of ignorance and of misdirection included in the wickedness of the world. It has not all come from wilfulness. Much of it needs pity rather than judgment, and guidance rather than condemnation. Many more people than any of us know are sincerely trying to do the right as it is given to them to see it, and as they have opportunity; and the helping and encouraging of these is no small part of the Christian ministry, even if it is not the greatest ministry of all. There is in our time a great increase of the sense of the worth and possibilities of human life, and an important Christian service is that of encouraging and guiding those who have their faces set in the right direction. It is a ministry which seeks to lead people out of their sins by giving them a better knowledge of the truth; of the truth about themselves, the world they live in, the lasting principles of right and wrong; and by showing them how impossible it is for any one to neglect or abuse his own nature with-

out serious loss and peril. It saves by indicating a better way, a nobler spirit, a worthier deed. For this, the life of Jesus is as redeeming as his death; even more so because it helps people to help themselves, instead of offering them merely an alms of grace, however sweet that may be to others. It is the limitation of the doctrine of repentance, taken by itself, as is frequently done, that it makes no direct provision for Christian nurture or for the development of a robust spiritual life. It provides remission of sins rather than the power of a new life. This want the gospel of Jesus' life and teachings supplies, and those who preach it have the joy of ministering in a most important way to the permanent regeneration of the world.

But there is still another deep human need, felt keenly even by those who have tasted the sweet cup of forgiveness, and have had experience in the life of sincere Christian endeavor. It is the yearning "for a closer walk with God," a nearer spiritual fellowship with the unseen; that life, beyond the sense of things, which is the most real life of all. At its best, any human life is limited to a few years or decades, and then we must go our way to the life of the spirit. Thinking upon that, does it not often grow heavy upon the heart that, if we are soon to make that journey, we ought to be preparing for it by some careful study of the facts of the spiritual life, so far as they are obtainable, that it may not open upon us unprepared? Besides, we all have dear ones in that land, whose heavenly interests are precious to us, and with whom we long to be in closer communion. Is this mystical, or unreal? Mystical it certainly is, but it is not unreal, unless everything we hold in faith is unreal, and all the great probabilities of human life are false; it is rather the only truly real life, compared with which repentance for sin, desires for a holy life, and even some practical success

in winning it, are but the merest apprenticeships. To what extent our Lord's life was occupied with this communion, a careful rereading of the Gospel stories will indicate to any thoughtful person; and if his mood in this respect seems to any of us unlike that of a normal human person, it is only because we have made so little progress towards its attainment. Here, then, is another opportunity for the preacher to do a useful service for the world, if he has maturity and skill for it. For human salvation is attained not merely through our emancipation from the bondage of sin, and some gain of Christian worth and virtue, but also by our acquiring some insight into the life of the spirit, and some experience of its sublime passion and fellowship.

Willard Scott.

JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

MATT. 14: 13-23

"Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life."—John 6: 35.

It is a great miracle and it presents a great mystery. The mystery is so great that some men have attempted to explain away the miracle. But their explanations are more marvelous than the miracle itself. If this story of the feeding of the five thousand be history it is indeed strange, but if it be fiction it is stranger still. If such a piece of literature be the fabrication of some Hebrew necromancer we have a problem of large dimensions with which to deal. That a Jewish publican or fisherman should spin in his own inner consciousness a story so graphic and straightforward, and then spin an alleged discourse so profound that nineteen centuries of thinking has not yet carried us to the bottom of it, and so nicely attuned to the miracle that word and deed seem but complementing parts of one strain of music, and then create a character on whose lips the discourse does not sound blasphemous and to whose hands the miracle does not seem disproportioned, is of course possible but hardly probable. If we desire to escape the charge of unwarranted credulity it were better to accept the story of the evangelists as a sober narrative of authentic fact. It is more reasonable to ascribe great deeds to Jesus of Nazareth than such great stories to the men who followed him.

It does indeed present a mystery, but the universe is filled with mysteries. We must not make too much ado

about the feeding of the five thousand; a little time should be given to the feeding of the fifty thousand and the five hundred thousand and the five hundred million, for all these multitudes are fed from day to day, and He who spreads the table daily is the one who spread the table for the crowd in the place which was desert on the other side of Galilee.

The poet who wrote the One Hundred and Fourth Psalm was impressed by nothing more than the fact that every living creature in air and sea and land maintains its existence by eating, and that to each one of these multitudinous creatures the Creator gives food in due season. The picture of a universe of living creatures waiting with hungry mouth upon the Eternal, each one receiving at the proper time the food which will satisfy its needs, fills the Hebrew poet with wonder and adoration. And we, too, should worship with grateful and adoring hearts if we pondered with more attentive mind the continuous feast which God prepares and serves to his waiting creatures.

Only men who think stand awestruck in the presence of the accustomed. The ordinary man is dulled by phenomena which are repeated. That a farmer tossing a few bushels of wheat into the ground should be able to feed five thousand men is indeed wonderful to the man who stops to think about it, but the thing has been done so many times that we number it among the commonplaces, and hurry on to look at something more spectacular and unique. That matter should increase in the warm and wonder-working hands of God's only Son is not when rightly looked at a whit more marvelous than that grains of wheat should multiply when acted on by the forces of God's earth.

It is a great miracle in every one of its dimensions. It made a deep and lasting impression. Its impressiveness arose not only from the character of the miracle itself but

also from the time of it, and from the striking discourse by which it was followed. It is the only miracle narrated by all four evangelists. Indeed, it is more than a miracle; it is a parable also. Down under the details and circumstances of the miracle lie great mines of meaning. We may call it the queen of the miracles.

It was springtime in Palestine. The feast of the passover was at hand. The grass was green and abundant. The world of nature was lovely, but the human world was growing bitter and dark. Herod's hands were red with the blood of John the Baptist. The terror-haunted king, like a crazed Macbeth, had visions in his chamber. The leaders of the nation had rejected Jesus, and their dislike to him was rapidly hardening into hate. The crowd was yet loyal and enthusiastic, but it was becoming feverishly and vehemently impatient. Men's blood was hot, but the heat was the heat of fever. Excitement had become so intense that the nation seemed about to burst into a blaze. The enthusiasm of the crowd was more dangerous than the icy aloofness of the leaders because the enthusiasm was fed by the fires of sordid expectations. There is a popularity which is more to be dreaded than scornful odium itself.

But in the midst of all the turmoil and tumult the Man of Galilee is calm. He has brought his disciples into a quiet spot removed from human habitations, in order to secure long needed rest. But the crowd, always heedless of the desires and needs of those whom it wishes to press into its service, finds him, breaks into the enclosure of his leisure, and he, nothing nettled, proceeds to teach the people things concerning the kingdom and lays his hands upon their sick. The disciples, impatient with this long-continued intrusion, curbed their feelings for a while, but in the afternoon, unable to restrain themselves longer, they came to Jesus, saying, "Send the multitudes away, that they

may . . . buy themselves food." It is not improbable that the hunger of the multitude was of less concern to the disciples than their own comfort and the Master's rest. But even with the sun sinking in the western sky he says to his surprised disciples: "They have no need to go away; give ye them to eat." In bewilderment they bring to him at his request the scant supply of food which a little boy has been carrying in a basket, and before the evening sun has disappeared the entire multitude has been not only fed but feasted, and each of the twelve disciples stands at the end of the day with a basket filled with food, equipped to minister to the needs of other multitudes, should other multitudes come in sight.

Every feature of the parable is of fascinating interest. The little boy who does not speak a word, but whose scant resources are the basis on which Jesus builds his mighty deed, is he not still among us, and is he not still too often overlooked? Whenever the situation seems desperate and the crisis has passed beyond our power, well would it be for us if we remembered that there is a lad in our midst in whom resources are hidden which when blest of God will solve the problem and save the world. There is no reason why old men should ever become despondent or hopeless so long as they are able to say: "There is a lad here." When life passes into its afternoon it is time to cultivate faith in the boys.

Many a man has thrown a stone at Philip, but much may be said in this poor, puzzled disciple's defense. He has been chided for his slowness and scoffed at for his lack of faith, and men have smiled at his doleful efforts in arithmetic, but nevertheless we are amazingly like him. In his position we would have done no better than he did, for are we not all slaves of the visible, and are we not constantly browbeaten by appearances, and do we not find it far easier to trust to our own calculations rather than

to the spacious promises of God? It is not surprising that Philip did not anticipate this miracle. Why should he have expected one? There was apparently no need for it. The villages were close at hand in which there was abundance for every need, and why should Jesus, always frugal with his displays of power, be expected to give to men miraculously what they could procure easily for themselves? Moreover, had not the Master told Philip and the other disciples how, one day when hungry, he himself had refused to turn stones into bread, and why should Jesus do for others what he refused to do for himself? Besides, the work of filling stomachs must have seemed to Philip a sordid and unworthy business for the world's Messiah who came to earth to heal men's diseases and point out to them the way of life. Philip, therefore, had the best of reasons for urging the Master to send the multitude away. When Jesus suggested the idea of giving the crowd its supper, Philip began at once to figure, but arithmetic in a world like this will never save an earnest man from despair. As soon as we begin to calculate we are lost. Face the needs of men and your own resources, and there is nothing to do but succumb. Moses had taught his countrymen that a hundred could put ten thousand to flight, but the world had not yet learned that one loaf could be made to feed a thousand. Men had learned their capacity for fighting, but not their capacity for feeding. It is this lesson of feeding which the disciples must now be taught. "They have no need to go away; give ye them to eat."

If it was presumptuous for the disciples to want to send the multitude away, it is a sort of presumption which the Church has not yet outgrown. The disciples had a genius for sending people away, and so have we. So long as there were villages near in which men could buy victuals for themselves, it did not occur to the disciples that it was their business to feed them. There is perennial signifi-

cance in the command: "Give *ye* them to eat." It was not beneath the Master's dignity to satisfy men's physical needs. When Jesus had compassion on men he had compassion on their appetites, for appetite is a part of man. If it is not beneath God's dignity to create a stomach, it is not beneath the dignity of God's Son to give the stomach the satisfaction which it craves. That every human being should be fed is fundamental, and the Christian Church is never truer to its mission than when engaged in ministering to the physical well-being of men. The progress of the race depends on the nourishment of the physical basis. The strength of a nation is conditioned on the bodily organization. To think well, pray well, sing well, work well, one must be well fed, and nothing is more important than that every deserving human being shall have enough to eat. He must not be allowed to subsist like Lazarus on crumbs. In God's universe every obedient man is entitled to a feast. Christian teachers, therefore, err greatly when they speak of physical needs with slighting accents, and look upon the body as a part of man beyond the domain of their concern. Physical hunger is ordained of God to play a mighty part in the history of the race, and the feeding of men cannot permanently be divorced from the religion which wishes to control and glorify the progress of civilization. It is for this reason that the leaders of the Church must ever concern themselves with the problem of wages. If a man eats he must work, and if he works he must receive compensation sufficient that he may eat. It is diabolical to say that labor may be bought in the market at any price which competition may compel the laborer to receive. Every industrious man and woman has a right to receive for his labor a wage which will keep him in health and strength and virtue. When manufacturers pay wages insufficient to maintain home life, and when merchants pay girls wages which are inadequate

to secure board and room and clothing, and when employers of labor buy labor in the market as they would buy pig iron or cattle, without regard to what the life of the laborer needs, a great wrong is done in God's world, and it is a wrong which God's Church must cry out against and keep on crying out against until it is overthrown. It is idle to talk about worship and sacraments when the fundamental principles of Christian morality are persistently trampled under foot. "Give ye them to eat." It came urgent and imperative to the disciples; it comes to us all. We cannot evade it. We cannot say, "Come, let us teach men beautiful maxims and let them get their food the best way they can." Christian men must see to it that the multitudes are fed. They must be fed on food which is nutritious. The food must be abundant. There must be more than enough. To see to it that all men are fed, may we not say that this is the first duty of the Christian Church?

But physical bread is not all. It is not to be made light of, but it is not all. Man is spirit as well as body. The spirit grows by what it feeds on. There is food for the soul. That food is God. The greatest of the miracles is simply a stepping-stone by which we are to pass to the great truth that God himself is the food of man. We eat God when we assimilate his thoughts, feelings and choices. It is difficult to catch God's thoughts and feelings and choices as he reveals himself to us in the landscape or the sky, and so his only Son comes into our world clothed in flesh that we may see clearly what God is. It is not difficult for us to ascertain the thoughts of Jesus or his feelings or his choices, and what Jesus thinks and feels and wills is the thought and feeling and will of God. When we build up in our life his ideas and feelings and choices, we feed upon God. Hence he can say: "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he

shall live for ever." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves."

Charles E. Jefferson.

SECOND QUARTER

JESUS VISITS TYRE AND SIDON

MARK 7: 24-37

"And from thence he arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it; and he could not be hid," etc.

A little girl lies sick in a heathen home within sight of the Great Sea and the ships and towers of Tyre. But the heart of her mother is not heathen. It is full of love and anxiety and longing for some deliverance. The sickness of her child is not one that can be helped by the ordinary rude remedies which she knows, for an unclean spirit has entered into and possesses the soul and body; and what can expel an evil spirit? Cries and moans like an animal's come from the fevered lips and wildly disordered brain. Yes, she is grievously tormented, indeed! The word passes, one day, through the village that the Great Prophet and Physician of Israel has come close to the borders of her country, and she determines to seek Jesus. Neighbors with kindly interest will watch the child while she is gone on her errand, hoping against hope. She takes the path that winds across the hills to the region where, if anywhere on earth, her help may come. As she journeys there is only one thing in her heart. Flowers by the wayside, brooks, hills, mountains with snowy caps, the clouds, the passing companies of travelers have nothing for her. She hears nothing. She sees nothing. Her daughter, back in the narrow chamber, tossing and crying, is ever before her,

and the Man who perhaps may be induced to save her. If the sun beats too hot and the way grows too hard, she cannot give herself rest. She reasons, as love will, "Cannot the great Wonder-worker do for me, a heathen, what he has done for his own people? Must he not be as attentive to my needs as to any? Is there any difference between my daughter and the child of an Israelite, just across the border? Must he not give way to me, if I can only make him hear me?"

At length she spies afar the little town where she has learned that Jesus is, and she feels weaker, more worthless, less courageous than ever when she sees the great multitude surrounding the place and the sick and lame and blind urging their claims. But she makes her way into the throng where others have brought their sick before she reaches the place. There are so many besides herself to get sympathy and help! She draws somewhat nearer,—near enough to lift up her voice over the heads of those closer to Jesus, and begins to cry aloud, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon!" But her cry seems borne away by the wind. If the Son of David hears her at all, he pays no attention. Yet nothing can silence her, for she has begun to pray, and is not going now to faint. She observes a dozen men who are assisting the Master and watching the crowd, and they add their petition to hers. They are getting tired of her clamor. "Send her away," they say, "for pity on us! We cannot endure her teasing! Let her have what she wants and go away!" But their heartless prayer only seems to make matters worse. Jesus has reason for not attending to the alien, whom he has noted and recognized by her dress and accent. He is not so indifferent as he seems. "I was not sent," he says to the Twelve, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

What a word for the poor mother to hear! Now she

will go back, no doubt, to her sorrowful home. It must be all over with her prayer for mercy!

But, no! Though she has heard what the Lord has said, it does not dishearten her. She crowds close in and falls down in worship at his feet. Her cry now is very short. She cannot argue at all. It is life or death with her. "Lord, help me!" is all she can say. She cannot argue. Peter's prayer, when he began to sink, was as short: "Lord, save me"!

And still there is no comfort. Jesus says to her only what he has just said to the disciples, speaking the hard truth that there is an order in his ministry. "Let the children first be filled," he says: "for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." But she now has found her opportunity. She will catch the Master in his own net! His words shall be turned to her favor! "True, Lord," she is saying, "I am only a dog! I was not born in the land of the Israelites! But even the little dogs under the table eat of the pieces which the children throw down to them!"

It is too much to be resisted longer. All along Jesus has been denying himself more than he denied the suppliant before him. He has been like Joseph at the court of Pharaoh, who first made himself strange to his brethren, and, then, when he could no longer restrain himself, said, "Cause every man to go out of my presence." And in the silence of the room, and the wonder of the sons of Jacob, his heart broke in love, and he cried, "I am your brother Joseph." And he wept aloud. So Jesus opens his heart. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." "For this saying go thy way; the demon is gone out of thy daughter."

"*For this saying.*" How quick its wit! How keen its force! Only a heart utterly bowed with sorrow, and surrendered to faith, and sure of the Master could have ever

thought of it! It was a word of humility, but it had a wonderful boldness in it. The very acceptance of a low position carried the day. She had a claim. It was only the claim of the house-dogs which played with the children all day. They were never starved and forgotten. The children would think of them, now and then, and drop a morsel from the full table to them. She was a part of the household, after all,—a humble part. After the children, she must come. "For that saying." Sayings born of the extremity of our need and the depth of our faith cannot be lost.

Now the woman withdraws from the crowd and begins her journey homeward. How still her soul is! How quiet all the world is! Her thoughts go over the line of hills to the chamber where she knows that her child lies resting after the unclean spirit has left her. Now she sees God in everything. All is well. The flowers look gayer, the birds sing sweeter, the path has less stones and briars. There is a fountain by the wayside she did not see before. She will drink from it and be refreshed. Something within her keeps saying, "Rejoice! rejoice." The Master and the mother and the little daughter will never be separated again.

We turn from this once sorrowing and now happy mother, who had won a victory by faith, at once over herself and the apostles and the seeming indifference of the Master, to follow him in his journey over the lower Lebanon range down into the circle of small cities east of the Sea of Galilee, where he is on half-heathen territory. Our attention is now to be fixed on him rather than on those he heals. They still flow toward him in an unbroken stream—the maimed, the blind, the lame, the deaf, and others with divers diseases. If he sits down on a mountain side, as at the first, to open his mouth and teach, he is

interrupted by the cries of the suffering and he preaches through the miracles which he works,—each by itself a word of God, to be studied as a word, a sign, a symbol or a parable of the kingdom of heaven among men.

Out of this crowd there is one to whom he gives special attention. Let us watch him now, for he will do a work of mercy in a new way. He singles out one man and in the process of restoring him to his unused organs of hearing and utterance we can read somewhat into the very mind of Christ. The man who is deaf and has an impediment in his speech, probably growing out of his deafness, hardly reveals himself at all. It is in sharp contrast with the story of the Syrophœnician mother. This man is brought by others to Christ. We may infer that his defects would largely shut him out of knowledge of the person who was to heal him or the precise purpose which his friends had in bringing him to be healed. Those were the days when the deaf could not employ the helps now so common, and when the poorer class, at least, would find it hard to express their thoughts. They were in the realm of silence. So this man, at the outset, was peculiarly remote from the power and the person with whom he was brought into living touch. Jesus singles him out and takes him away from the crowd to a private place. Why does he do this?

We must believe that it was primarily to fasten the man's mind on the person who was to help him and on the source of the power which was to be used. The great multitude would distract the mind and render it harder to reach the soul itself and awaken the desire and faith for healing. So it must ever be that before the full restoring power of the Lord enters into and possesses us we must be alone with him. We must be made to see that it is not the church, nor the people, nor the songs, nor the acts of faith in rising or kneeling, nor the voices of our friends, nor the sweep of feeling over

the mass around us that brings us to God. Jesus himself and alone saves us. And although we may dread to be left alone with him, alone we must be, if only for an instant. And so we watch the two—the Saviour, as yet unknown, and the man deaf and dumb, brought to Jesus by others who had more faith.

We see that the Master will in this case use the senses that are intact to impress those that are defective. He puts his fingers into the man's ears as if to say, Now I am going to make you hear. He touches his tongue as if to say, Now I am going to make you speak right. Then he lifts up his eyes to heaven, as if to say to the wondering man, You see that my power all comes from God through prayer.

Now concerning all these acts and others which Jesus used at other times, we can say with the apostle, We all have knowledge. We know that they are nothing in themselves. They only arouse the dull mind of the man and create an expectation that at last, after long years in which the sounds of nature and the sweet voices of children had been denied—at last deliverance and restoration are to come.

And do we not wonder at the sympathy which Christ shows for this man and the labor which he bestows upon him? It would have been easy, as we imagine, for a word to be spoken and healing granted, but here infinite pains are taken, the miracle delays as if it were hard to be performed, so that when the man's soul is reached he may know that God has blessed him and that he has been brought into touch with God.

This justifies us in employing symbolic acts to arouse and deepen faith. What more ineffective in itself than a piece of broken bread and a sip of wine at the communion? What can they do for us? And yet we are told that in the right partaking of them we become one body with Christ's

people, one bread with them, and that we do show forth the Lord's death till he come. What more commonplace than a little pure water in a silver basin or the baptistry or the stream? Can water really bring us into touch with heaven?

Indeed, we show how little we understand our own natures and the language of signs and symbols when we make light of the communion-table and of the water of baptism. When we see Jesus taking clay and moistening it and putting it on the eyes of a blind man and telling him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, we see that we need symbolic acts, we need sacramental hours and deeds to fortify our faith.

"Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" The first word which this deaf man heard. The Son of man who came to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers speaks that word. He is now fulfilling the ancient prophecy which says that in the days of the Messiah the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

Immediately the man speaks right. But what does he say? There lives no record of reply. We wonder whether it would be possible for him to stay silent. Will not the stones cry out if he does? He must be, we believe, in the rejoicing multitude that praised the God of Israel and said of his Son; "He hath done all things well; he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

One more revelation of the very heart of Jesus is given us in a word which we must not pass over lightly. We read that, taking the man aside from the multitude privately, he put his finger in his ears and spitting, touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he *sighed* and said, "Ephphatha!" *He sighed!* They were alone. The man could hear nothing, for he had not been healed. It was a lonely sigh, and yet it came from Him who was about to do an act of mercy and open the kingdom of both worlds to

a poor suffering mortal. Were it given to you or me to enter a hospital with power to speak the word of healing to every inmate, should we not smile rather than sigh? Would not our hearts be filled with triumph that, at least, so much of the realm of misery was to be invaded and changed to an abode of happiness? I am sure that we should not sigh if we were to perform some surgical operation that demanded great skill,—a skill which God had given us—and we had every reason to believe that what we did would bring health to some one. But the lonely Man of sorrows, face to face with another evidence of the work of sin in the world, breathed out a sigh before he lifted up a prayer. So it was at the grave of Lazarus. He wept just before he brought the dead to life.

Was he again impressed with the sins for which he had come to suffer? Did the sorrows of the world fill his heart again to the brim? Did he wonder whether the healed man before him would forget the mercy and deny, with the tongue which had been restored, his first songs of praise? Whatever it was that led to that sigh it stands before us as an undesigned proof of the burdened heart of our Redeemer and the cost of our redemption. And if ever we are tempted to make light of our Christian calling and to deny our Lord by a trivial or impure act or by open refusal to be counted his, let us recall that sigh and go, as Peter did, to some place where our tears of penitence will prove that we still love Christ in spite of a momentary denial of him.

A deaf and dumb man faces Jesus Christ without knowing or hearing him or realizing who he was or what he could do. But is it not a parable of these times when multitudes stand before the presence of the Son of man without hearing him and are silent when they ought to be preaching him and his gospel? Indeed, he is daily brought face to face with the people. By the church bell, by the open doors of God's house, by the millions of Bibles, by holy

lives, Christ stands before a dumb and deaf people. They can hear the noises of the street; the tick of the telegraph that tells them how to invest their gold; the voice of comrades that woo them to places of evil; the sounds of merriment in the theater, but they face Christ and cannot hear him! They may try to pray and their tongues are tied. All the more then must we, who have faith, bring these maimed ones to him in prayer, believing that he can reach the most careless and slow and cold and dead by his power.

Edward N. Packard.

PETER CONFESSES THE CHRIST

MARK 8: 27-38

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."—Matt. 16: 16.

A company of scientific men were gathered in earnest discussion concerning the fundamentals of existence. Some looked at the world from the standpoint of the materialist as something that had happened; others regarded the world as the expression of a spiritual order with One behind the order guiding and controlling it. When the conference was concluded one of the brightest minds turned to a young man who happened to be in the favored presence and exclaimed with warmth, "If you do not believe that this world is made by design, by love, you may be living in the same house with me but you are not in the same world with me."

That is, after all, the difference between great companies of people. They are living in the same house but in opposite worlds. You touch shoulders to-morrow with a man by your side. You are in the same house with him but your aspiration may be so wide apart from his that you are in an utterly different world. Two men are gazing at the thundering cataract of Niagara. One sees in it the glory and beauty of God; the other sees a chance for a sawmill. Each is living in a very different world.

Jesus found this experience true. There were many people round him there in Palestine who were sharing with him the ordinary experiences of life, living in the same house but in a different world, and he was interested,

as every man is interested, in knowing what public opinion had to say regarding him.

Sometimes it is a chastisement for a man to know what the public thinks of him, and sometimes it is an inspiration. Upon one occasion, therefore, when Jesus was alone with his disciples he entered into familiar conversation with them. He had known them for a long time and he said, "My friends, what does the world think about me? Whom do men say that I am?" They answered him familiarly, "There are a good many different opinions about you. You have already discovered that. There are some people who think you are an impostor. We are not sure but they would like to see you put to death. They have no faith in you. There are other people who think you are a reproduction in modern times of some of the old prophets. They think you are true, sincere, and regard you as a modern realization of ancient prophecy."

After they had concluded Jesus turned to them and said, "But whom do you, my disciples, say that I am?"

Then there was a moment's pause and Peter, who was always so quick for words, looked into the eyes of his Master and said, "We believe that thou art the Christ."

It was a great moment in Peter's experience. If you will read the parallel passage in the other Gospels you will see how graciously surprised Jesus was to find that Peter and the other disciples had come to live in the same house with him, that they had seen his soul, that they had come to understand that he was indeed the One whom the world had so long waited for and so long expected, that he was the Messiah.

Three things about this expression of Peter's are of quick interest, namely, his confession, its antecedents and consequents.

The confession was an incident in Peter's spiritual experience. Progress in any department of life means escape

from that which is technical into the freer air of that which is universal and which has for itself spiritual authority.

There is a little child in your home. At first the child must be carried in loving arms. After a time the baby takes a step, and falls. Then a number, and falls. And then there comes a time when he walks right off and thinks nothing about it, and the little child has escaped from the technique of the thing into the freedom of the spirit of it.

Walking is for every one a succession of falls. But as the years go on the technique is absolutely forgotten. One walks and thinks nothing about it. The experience of the musician illustrates the same principle. Who does not remember the first lessons upon the piano? That first quarter! Fingers all thumbs! Never able to strike the note you intended! At the end of the first year a little more liberty, but still in bondage to the technique. As the years go on and the practice is faithful, the soul becomes free and one is able to take command of the musical instrument and to think not at all about the technique but only about the way in which the soul can be made to talk through that instrument.

Wordsworth speaks of "that serene and blessed mood, when,

> "With an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things."

The thing which makes a poet supreme is this, that he "sees into the life of things" and forgets about the technique of the rhyme as he sings his soul to the wind.

James Russell Lowell's Commemoration Ode is one of the finest specimens of American poetry, yet the ode itself is an improvisation. Two days before the commemoration he had told a friend that it was impossible for him to write it, that he was "as dull as a door-mat!" Suddenly he was

seized with a mighty inspiration. Something took hold of him, and he sat up all night and put his soul upon paper. "It came out of me," he said, "with a rush." It was the soul of James Russell Lowell taking his powers under command and placing them at the disposal of his earnest patriotism.

When Lord Tennyson was eighty years old he sat down, took his pen, and wrote as rapidly as he could that inspired lyric, "Crossing the Bar." He handed it to his son, who read it and said, "Why, father, that is the crown of your life work." "It came to me in a moment," was Tennyson's reply. Progress for the poet is the escape from the technical into those wider areas of the spiritual where one forgets the incidental and for a little while sees not "through a glass darkly," but even here on earth "face to face."

In the spiritual world there are the precise counterparts of these experiences. Dr. Dale, for example, was writing his Easter sermon. He had been studying the foundations of faith for years. Suddenly his pen would no longer write. He knew not what to say next. Then in an instant he arose and paced his study back and forth saying to himself, "I see it! I see it! And now I must make the people see it."

It was simply an incident of a soul touched by the living Spirit of God, seeing the truth which he was impotent to demonstrate.

One night after Dr. Bushnell had been preaching he waked his wife and said, "I have found it." Said his wife, "What have you found?" "The gospel." It had come to him, at last, after all his thought and study. It was the transference from argument to faith. "I saw clearly that night," he says. "I seemed to turn a corner in my spiritual experience and I have never since then entirely lost the vision."

Now this experience of Peter's was precisely of a kind with the experience of Dr. Dale and Dr. Bushnell. It was simply the occasion when his eye was opened and he saw what he had never seen before, when his soul was lifted up in the close embrace of the ever-watching God and he saw into the depths of the soul of Jesus Christ. He had seen the wonderful works of Jesus Christ and they had not failed to impress him. He had heard the words of the Master, and they had not failed to find a lodgment in his soul. But under these peculiar circumstances he sees the soul which he had never with such clearness of vision discerned before, so that when the Master asked that searching question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter was ready with the answer, not born upon his lips but in his soul, "*Thou art the Christ.*"

The antecedents of that great experience must be noticed by every spirit which believes in the normal progress of the soul when once it strikes hands with God. It was almost an accident which brought Peter into the presence of the Master. His brother had seen Jesus Christ and had been impressed by him, and he said, "I will go and get Peter." He went and told his brother about this teacher, and Peter, being interested, yielded, as any other man, to the influence of one he loved. Then Peter's spiritual life began. First he was an acquaintance of Jesus Christ; then his acquaintance ripened into friendship, his friendship into discipleship, discipleship into apostleship. Peter came to his great spiritual experience along the line of a gradual progression. The saints who are born in the morning and perfected by sunset have been the great stumbling-blocks of the world. It is not the way God fulfils himself. The great law of gradual progress works in the distinctly spiritual realm. First we are caught by the word, then by the work, and gradually by the personality, until our souls come to make the great confession which

is born from our own personal experience, "Thou art the Christ."

Jesus Christ is always willing to wait for the maturing of the impress of his own word. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. James knew that truth when he said, "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit . . . and has long patience for it." Jesus waited two years before he asked those disciples what they thought about him, waited for his presence to make its influence felt upon them, waited for the shining of his soul to drive away the darkness of their own, waited until through his words, through his works and through his attitude towards life their own souls would adjust themselves to the great and glowing truth which he was revealing. Jesus is willing to wait for the amplitude of any spirit, to wait for two or ten or twenty or a thousand years. The only thing that Jesus commands or wants is attitude of spirit.

Let us turn to the subsequent experience of Peter. It is a common confession that if a great truth gets hold of us we want to communicate it to some one else; through prayer or exhortation or service or study, in some way we are bound to communicate that divine truth which was communicated to us. Peter saw that day deeper into the soul of Jesus Christ than he had ever seen before, and he could not help himself, he must communicate it to the world. He was not one of those sundown saints, for it was Peter who almost immediately afterwards received that scathing rebuke from the lips of the Master, "Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." It was Peter who in his hot haste took his sword and denied his gospel by cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. It was Peter who cursed and swore, "I know not the man," and then went out "weeping bitterly." Follow him! It was

Peter a little later who was establishing that church at Jerusalem. It was Peter who was making those great, strong, determined speeches for Christ. It was Peter who went out into Palestine in order that by his sacrifice and by his work he might establish the churches. It was Peter who went from Palestine out into God's great world carrying the testimony of the truth and everywhere demonstrating the spiritual life which had been born in his own soul. A man who has had a great spiritual experience is bound to communicate that experience to others. A man who has had a growing experience, who has seen the sympathetic heart of Christ and in some moment of victory has declared, "Thou art the Anointed One!"—that man is bound to communicate in some way that spiritual satisfaction which is his. That is the deep, abiding significance of spiritual vision.

There are some who will say, "I will be frank with you; I have no interest at all in these spiritual experiences." If this is so it means that you are content to live in the house, but that you have no desire to live in the world with God. It means that you are content to take whatever you can lay your hands on of blessings from the Most High, but that you have no desire to fellowship with the Giver. It means that the windows of your soul are being gradually curtained, and in place of the glorious sunshine of God the shadows are gathering, and by and by it will be with you as with Judas when he made his final denial, "He . . . went . . . . out: and it was night." The penalty of a life which chooses sin is that the great opportunity withdraws, the soul shrivels, the horizon narrows, and the life loses its spirit, its hope, its expectation.

There are those who say, "I do not wish to be classed with those who do not care. Place me with those who do not know. If I could only be sure that these things are true, that the Unseen stands by the side of every living

soul and walks as Jesus walked with Peter; if I could only believe that that is progress of soul until gradually unfolding there comes a time when the deeper insight is given to the spirit—I would believe." Would you? Tell me this, can a testimony originate an experience? It can confirm it, but can it originate it? Suppose I would bring you the testimony of ten thousand men who have shared the same experience as Peter. Would that testimony incorporate that experience in your soul? Suppose I should bring you a thousand men who would testify that at some hotel there is a fine dinner spread, would that testimony keep you from starving? Testimony can confirm an experience, but it cannot originate one.

Suppose I should begin by laying down the proposition that God is in spirit to-day over all his world. Suppose I should add to it the proposition that God reveals himself in nature in all his wonderful glory. Suppose I should show that it was not imaginable that a God who reveals himself in nature, in glory, should not also reveal himself in personality. Suppose I should take the personality of Jesus Christ and lead you from point to point in order to show you that Jesus Christ is the Son of God—at the end of it all would you be a disciple? Would you be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

There are many who enjoy intellectual speculation concerning religious things, but we never come into the possession of truth simply by reasoning about it, because

> "Truth is within ourselves. It takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
> There is an inmost center in us all
> Where trust abides in fullness—and to know
> Rather consists in opening out a way
> Whence the imprisoned splendor may escape
> Than in effecting entry for a light
> Supposed to be without."

So although you say you do not know if you are in

earnest in wanting to know I can point you the way. He that willeth to do His will shall know. There is no other way under God's shining heaven for a man to know the realities of spiritual life except as he finds those realities in his own personal experience. For that which is real has power, and that which has power is of God, and truth is never an abstract generalization. Truth is a concrete efficiency. And if you want to know whether a thing is true or not just watch it and see if it has life in it, what it does; and if it lives and moves and swings the souls of men that is the proof that it is the truth.

So we are face to face with the urgency of the personal appeal. That experience of Peter's was unique only in this respect—that Jesus Christ was in person right there in front of him. Every disciple of the Lord as he moves out from the blade to the ear and then to the full corn has those times when Christ is nearer to him than he was yesterday. Character is caught; it is never taught. Begin to do the thing which Jesus Christ would have you do to-day, just as Peter did. Walk with him in the way, and gradually there shall come to your soul that uplifting, soul-stirring experience that Jesus Christ is the chiefest among ten thousand, worthy of your faith, worthy of your devotion, worthy of your fellowship. Do the next thing according to the spirit of Jesus Christ, and you have entered upon that highway the end of which is not merely the golden realization of that world to which we go but the deeper satisfactions and the deeper spiritual insight which in the world that now is are reserved for all those who will put their soul in touch with the soul of Jesus Christ. Do that, and you will be like those men who said to the woman of Samaria, "Now we know, not because of thy speaking: but we have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

Nehemiah Boynton.

JESUS TRANSFIGURED

MARK 9: 2-13

"And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John," etc.

In treating of this scene in the earthly life of Jesus Christ, we can only say, with a keen and reverent scholar, "It is too high for us—this august spectacle—we cannot attain unto it: its grandeur oppresses and stupefies: its mystery surpasses our comprehension: its glory is ineffable."

The three disciples chosen to witness this striking revelation of their Master, may or may not have represented the different phases of the life and activity of the Church he was establishing among men. They were fit and competent reporters, as they had been, more than once, specially honored by him in moments of exceptional showing of his power and mission.

As together they climbed the rugged sides of Hermon, in the late afternoon of a perfect Syrian day, they beheld the shadows slowly moving across the plain of the Hauran and falling upon the shining domes and groves of the distant Damascus. But his converse with them cast even denser gloom upon their spirits. Why would their Lord thus dwell upon disaster, when he had within himself all the resources of triumph? Peter had already sharply rebuked him for such morbid words, only to receive a crushing reply. Still, one and all thought better of his fortunes, and tried to relieve the strain by glowing prophecies of his

princely rule. This night, their hopes were to be both dashed and confirmed, as they were clarified.

It is to be remembered that *this wonderful unfolding of celestial glories was in connection with the prayer of Jesus Christ.*

According to Luke's account he "went up into a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered." This habit of the Son of man is frequently spoken of, as attesting his relationship to dependent mortals and setting them an example of what to do in their daily needs. What he bade, he did himself. The more we realize his perfect humanity, the more we perceive the necessity he was under to keep in closest touch with his Father in heaven. As, now and then, he caught glimpses of his momentous task in its vast measure, it must have overwhelmed him. Every instant he must walk and speak and act in entire agreement with the divine will. The least interruption of this holy intercourse might be fatal so far as the salvation of the world was concerned. Prayer was his essential life during his earthly stay. In those hallowed moments perhaps more than once—had there been any to see—the splendor of the spirit within would have startlingly transfigured his face.

Such are the sacredest seasons any know now, and the most full of transforming power. If ever the radiance of heaven is reflected by human features, it is when the soul is talking with God. The prayerful attitude is the Spirit's opportunity to assert himself.

It is also *the occasion for communion with the holy dead.*

In this instance the two most eminent persons in Israel's history, Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the prophet, came for conference with Him of whom they had spoken, and whose way they had prepared, ages before. With minds able now to look beyond rite and symbol and discern the profound bearing of the sacrifice for sin he was soon to

make—they could be an enheartening presence. If words can have weight with any confronting an unwelcome duty, if reflections can strengthen and fortify a fainting sufferer, if sympathy can nerve one who must undergo terrible trial—and they can—then, in full view of a shameful and bitter death, such were forthcoming. Both these heroic souls had known to what fearful tests men can put their fellows. Both had grandly fulfilled their mission in behalf of an ungrateful people. Both had found "the king of terrors" only a specter through whose shadow they had harmlessly passed on to the reward of the faithful. Now their assurance was helpful. Was it not to confirm him in the thought that now he was to complete and put his seal upon all that had preceded in the infinite plan of redemption? To see clearly one's lifelong endeavor issuing in triumph is to be the more ready to pay all it involves. If a soldier can thus willingly meet death that his country may be safe, He who looks beyond all earthly horizons into eternal destinies made blessed is steadied for the agonies of betrayal and crucifixion and even the brief hiding of the Father's face.

Whatever this scene and this experience signified to the Christ—to his disciples it was *an unanswerable testimony to his unworldly nature and office.*

He had been speaking with them on the level of their conceptions and trying to make them realize the greater worth of invisible things—the preeminence of soul over body, of truth and righteousness over untruth and sin. But they had been judging him and his words by human standards and hesitating to commit themselves wholly to his teaching. There was with them, as with others, the query, "What manner of man is this?" When some astounding work was done, the flash of omnipotence was soon obscured by his common deeds. They were ever trying to account for and adjust themselves to him, but not

grasping the truth of his divine character. Not even Peter, a moment after his discerning confession, was ready to accept its meaning. The cross looming in grim and awful threat before the Christ and them, made their Lord's claims and precepts almost void. A Messiah was to be a conqueror, not a victim, nor could that notion be driven from their minds. But the stern progress of the days brought very near that dreadful hour of torture and disgrace and defeat. Why should they not revolt from the thought or the hint of it?

So was given this overpowering vision. That is God's way when his children have come to the critical point, in the supreme struggle of faith. If the gleaming purity which the dazzling snows of the mountain summits were too dull to typify, was more than they could bear, and this was but the garment in which their Master was clothed, then celestial glory was his, of right. It was full demonstration that the unseen world had its highest honors for him. They could imagine nothing more convincing.

And when, out of the boundless spaces, the very air was vocal with the language of the Infinite, which mortal ears could understand, when it asserted his divine Sonship and authority, all doubt was banished. The unbelievable was true. God veiled in form as a man was among them for one sublime purpose which he was frequently and distinctly telling.

That revelation, it would have seemed, would have been *burned* in upon the memory of those three witnesses, and have almost seared their vision to any other earthly sight, as is theirs who have gazed long at the sun. How could it ever become dim or remote? Yet that thrilling night upon Hermon was all forgotten, as the thick darkness of Gethsemane and Calvary soon enveloped them. So far, however, as visible signs can create courage and confidence, they were granted to those who could best appreciate them.

Was not this also, in a way, *a confirmation of the truth of personal immortality?*

From what we can learn of the popular thought at that time it would appear that very few would say,

> —"immortality o'ersweeps
> All pains, all tears, all time, all fears—and peals
> Like the eternal thunders of the deep
> Into my ears, this truth—Thou liv'st forever."

If they had such faith or hope, most were content to let it remain in a hazy uncertainty.

But Jesus' admonitions, and much of the stress of his warnings lay in that the future had its close relations to this life—so close that weal and woe both hinged upon what was done here. The universal reawakening, too, out of what he termed "sleep" was distinctly affirmed. But to those who had only the ordinary witnessings of such a tremendous reality, who had grown up sharing in the common ideas concerning it, who had not much balanced it over against a very tangible present, such doctrine was not vital. On it, however, their teaching and conduct were to hinge. It should have vivid proof in their sight.

Moses and Elijah were names on the lips of every Hebrew, and their great services for their nation were never allowed to become dim. They—if any ever did—lived

> "again
> In minds made better by their presence, . . .
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> For miserable aims that end with self."

Yet who knew that they still existed in any other sense than that of a blessed influence? Who among men had ever looked on their features since last Israel beheld the one going up the steeps of Nebo, and a companion saw the other caught away in a flaming chariot? This memorable

night, however, when the heavens were irradiated with that light which never wanes in the celestial firmament, these two were again before the eyes of the disciples as they had been before the generations long since perished. How these of the later day recognized them, save as traditional descriptions were correct, we cannot know. But there they were in the full vigor of a glorified being—transfigured, even as He of whom they had testified to the men of their day! Verily the change called death, and dreaded, had no power over them.

Their interest in what was occurring on earth had not ceased, as the theme of their converse was the greater eclipse coming soon upon the Sun of Righteousness, and which would be *total* at Jerusalem. Talking, moving, planning, encouraging, surely that was what they did in the centuries gone. Eternity was to them what time is to us, and no ghostly and uncanny changes had it brought upon them. What was thus true of *two* persons who had walked the earth, must be true of others—yes, of all! A mighty, an unwarrantable inference? Not if, supporting it, speaks the intuition God has implanted in every soul! Not if its opportunities are limited and its ambitions and inspirations reach out to a larger range beyond the seen and temporal! Not if there was good reason for its existing at all, and looking up recognizing its Father and anticipating his love and care! The mortal rightly presumes on the immortal, and so said Peter of his "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," and John, "this is the promise which he promised us, even the eternal life," while James went calmly on to it, as Herod's sword opened the way.

A further and incidental lesson which must have been learned there, was *the need of action rather than spiritual indolence.*

Three tabernacles in the seclusion of the upper world,

where holy thoughts and persons might together abide, were, in the rash word of one, a desirable condition. Perhaps it was the utterance of a dazed mind. Yet he spoke for multitudes since who have believed that the withdrawal from a sinful race, and the giving over of self to religious exercises and study and prayer, apart from any diverting face or voice, is the highest duty and privilege.

Such theory had its rebuke here at the first, when the enthusiastic recluses on looking round found their proposed "patron saints" had vanished. God's servants were not here for entertainment or ecstatic rest, while his kingdom had not yet come. Such rare glimpses of the spirit-land should make them braver and surer as they strove for its life to be established here. "The solitary man becomes either a beast or an angel," the Italians say, and they are best able to judge of the monastic habit. In the rush and press of daily business, in the midst of those who are struggling with temptation in its countless shapes, in the contest of fanciful theories with stubborn facts, men are more likely to become angelic—if once the Christ has won there—than if shut away in some cell, contemplating the evil which tirelessly springs up within their own breasts.

And that dream of luxurious self-indulgence which imagines heaven a state of eternal receiving and expanding, in which the soul lives for its own satisfaction, is delusive. There is no divine likeness in that conception, since the Father is ever in his universe as one who *works* and his angels are ministering spirits.

His will is made known—not as Confucius would say, "It is for the learner to come to learn, and not for the teacher to go to teach,"—not by keeping it among the initiated, or by waiting for inquirers, but by publishing it everywhere. "Go preach" was the Christ's parting command. Turkish gunboats, safely moored in the Golden Horn, soon become rusted hulks, while England's battle-

chips, cruising in all seas, can give the law to unwilling peoples. Aggression and not musing there must be, at least till peace has come through the yielding of all hearts to Him whose name it is. For a good while yet there will be small occasion for tabernacle-building, save as the wearied, for a little, stop to recruit their strength and spirit for new contests.

This does not mean that Jesus has not his shrine where he meets his own, but that he goes out thence with them, as he did down the mountain side, to grapple with the foul fiend which has cursed his work. It means that he still is endowing them to "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils."

Thus and thus only are they hastening the answer to their own prayer, "Thy kingdom come."

DeWitt S. Clark.

THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTY

LUKE 10: 1-16

"Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come."

The circumstances, motives and counsels reported in the story of the sending out of the Seventy differ little from the like accompaniments of the mission of the Twelve, related in all three Synoptic Gospels. This narrative, however, found only in Luke, is given with certain touches and a peculiar emphasis which impart to it an interest and impressiveness all its own. The earthly and present seeming and the reality judged by its final outcome and divine purport, of an action and occurrence, are nowhere shown in such striking and inspiring contrast. Seventy plain men go forth, on a brief errand, with no adequate provision even for bodily comfort, warned to expect opposition and rejection, as sheep in the midst of wolves, yet are made to appear as agents and forerunners in a revolution, who upset the kingdom of darkness, and with their own names head the long roll of citizenship in the new Kingdom of Light.

The emphatic texts and points which bring out the contrast, are these: This was a laymen's mission. From the first there was such a larger circle of disciples about the Master,—for every one of the Twelve, at least a half dozen men fit to go forth, like them evangelists, commissioned and empowered in the same terms. They were, then, relatively humble instruments in a momentous service.

How this fact thrilled the heart of Christ is shown in the words of verse 21, where he calls them "babes" and rejoices that it is such as they, not the wise and understanding, who are so highly favored by the election to share in the counsel and activity of God. They were to go whither Christ himself was to come; they were, even in the midst of their ministrations, to keep the eyes of men set forward to transcendent results, saying, "the kingdom of God is come nigh." By this same thought they were to revive their own spirits in defeat when outcast from cities; even while brushing the dust from their feet, they were to know that, notwithstanding, "the kingdom of God *is* come nigh." Finally, lest success, more perhaps than failure, should fasten their thoughts on the mere moment's effect of their labors, Jesus closed this mission with the great words, not related of the former mission of the Twelve, found in verses 18-21, especially the mystical yet luminous saying: "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven." There stands forth the mighty contrast in its full meaning. They saw a few demons subject unto themselves through His name; He saw Satan, with lightning force and swiftness, cast down from the height of his power. The life of the Son of man, who came to minister, was spent quietly and methodically going about doing good, but all this simple task-work was filled with an enthusiasm born of prophetic vision of its remote and final consummation. His life perfectly illustrates the power to mingle "visions and tasks," which makes the perfection of service. Not often when we watch the Worker are we permitted to look into his soul and behold the inspiring vision. But in this instance we are, and more completely I think than in any other case. And here the glorifying light of vision falls over, not his own, but the work of other men, his humblest helpers. What they saw as a successful enterprise, brought to a close with their return, summed up in a record of a few

healings and conversions, he saw as part of the triumph of redemption. It is no wonder that his spirit was uplifted with thrills of joy and gratitude; that he crowned the enthusiasm of the seventy with congratulation upon the unsuspected meaning of their success; that he turned from them to ascriptions of joy to God the Father, Lord of heaven and earth. Such moments as those in his life must have compensated for all the losses and griefs and disappointments of the Man of sorrows. We do not wonder as we realize how the Master lived in vision as well as in fact, that though his story may seem, as Newman has said, but part of a "Record of Human Sorrows," yet its impression is that of the most joyful and courageous life ever lived.

But this narrative, interpreted by this saying of Christ, was given by Luke to his generation, and has its value for men of ours, for another reason than to reveal the secret of Christ's indomitable joy and animation. It was to invite us, in our measure, to resort to the same source of courage and cheer—to view our life and work from its ultimate, and not only from its passing aspect; thus to learn as the poet says "what we are worth to God," who values everything from its place and importance in his final purpose. Though we have not the divine infallibility and confidence of prophetic vision which belonged to the Lord, we too have the right to the same happy faculty of consecrated imagination. What is it but a form of that faith which gives substance to things hoped for? By it we can outrun our present doings, and standing at the end of the story look back and see them in a different and surprising perspective, all their relations and proportions altered, the last often found to be first and the first last.

The gain from this change of standpoint, as it touches our work for God, is most obvious. We shall drop our futile ratings of small and great,

"All service ranks the same with God—
With God, whose puppets best and worst
Are we: there is no last nor first."

But it is our privilege, duty we may rather say, to dignify all life and experience, every lot and every calling by the same use of vision.

What lasts through life and death, what mingles with the things that God is making and which he will not allow to perish, that is great, that is sublime, let its current rank be mean or fine. If the doctrine of immortality has any value, it must mean that something immortal is being wrought out by the efforts and experience in every life. Even in the honest exercise of the bodily senses we may be making faculty which shall outlast the material body, and be the germ or the outline as it were of skill and discernment for higher attainments and uses in the house not made with hands. This is the chief contribution to the truth of immortality, which the long and patient thought of Oriental minds has been commissioned to furnish. They taught a doctrine of "Karma," which we might almost translate as habit. And this karma is indestructible. The body and its members and senses may dissolve, but the traits, the aptitudes, the accomplishments which the man by his doings here below has wrought out, remain and become the self, the character, which, as it were, will meet him and invest him in his new existence. Without adopting the phrase or philosophy of this quaint teaching, we may at least illustrate by it a truth, full of beauty and power, too, if faithfully applied. The exercise and cultivation of our powers in the humble duty of our life-work,—which seems forced upon us and wears, if we do not mix a finer thought with it, an appearance of drudgery,—cannot come to nothing. It will be treasure laid up in heaven, the best of all treasure, so much of capacity, self-control, self-development, lasting beyond death into the life of

larger opportunity. This is a thought which runs like a thread of gold through the poetry of Browning, making it all a very gospel of the larger hope. He teaches that the artist is painting pictures, not only on earthly canvases, and carving statues in perishable marble, but, as it were, shaping forms and creating harmonies that will never die. And so he is, for he is conforming his own eye and hand, and the more spiritual aspects of these senses and organs to the eternal beauty and harmony, and so will step into the world of purer and diviner beauty all prepared to see, and to reproduce perhaps, hues and forms that eye hath not seen. So will it be with the things ear hath not heard. The musician strikes out with his keys a music which does not die away with the sound on the earthly ear.

> "No beauty, nor good, nor power
> Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
> When eternity affirms the conception of an hour."

Why are there no such forms of utterance as these in the sayings of Christ? Why does he not console the artist, the musician, cut off before his labors are finished, or hindered perhaps by the clumsiness of his hand from realizing the dream of his soul? It was because he had a gospel for all men, not simply for genius. And he has rendered it in terms of the experience of common life. He would have us know that there is something immortal working itself out from the every-day labors of the man of the world and of business. He is achieving something more than the results in view while he works.

Those results may be temporal, material, unimportant, but a certain unsuspected "treasure in heaven" is being laid up to await him at the end of his long day's work. "Yes, indeed," you say, "we know he is making character, and preparing a good account with which at last to meet his

Judge." But of that, even, I am not now speaking. The works of a man do follow him in a more literal sense. His business he leaves behind; all his profits and revenues fall out of his hand. Nothing of all that he has made and bought goes with him—"no-thing," not one parcel of his much goods laid up for many years. But somewhat from his works does follow him. The qualities which have been both the means and result of his success on earth, these attainments are part of the imperishable wealth that lasts as long as personality. They are part of a man's improved self, and shall await him in his new life,—garments of practical use to be worn with the white robe of righteousness. If we could vividly foresee this, we should covet every opportunity for the practice of our powers that life can bring us. We should strive for skill, for taste, for learning, for the faculty of sympathy, for the secret of influence, as for hid treasure. They would be annuities, as it were, the full profits on which would accrue only in the life to come. "Jesus lived for two worlds at one and the same time." That was the secret of the humble human interest and zest, and at the same time the unfailing elevation of motive and hope, that made his both the happiest and holiest life ever lived in human flesh.

Labors, pains, deprivations, they crowded in upon him, yet his was an easy yoke, a light burden. Ours would be, if we could even in illuminated moments leap forward to look backward upon life, and learn the real worth of what we have done and suffered, lost and gained. More than that, this way of seeing would be a lamp to our feet, a light to our path. We should make our own ambition and desire the thing that lasts and has eternal worth.

When Jesus spoke from that standpoint to his returning disciples, and computed the value of their short ministry in terms of its final result, saying, "I saw you pulling down

the pillars of Satan's throne, and himself plunged from the height to the abyss," he held them to that last true view of things until he had shown them the thing of highest worth. Rejoice, above every other achievement "rejoice that your names are written in heaven." That is what God rejoices in, that is what Christ rejoices in, as the reward of the travail of his soul for our redemption. None of our acquisitions of skill, or taste or learning, none of our services rendered to the world will satisfy him, unless we have won the new name, which means the new nature. Nothing less will satisfy us in that last retrospect of eternity, unless we can rejoice that we have been given the new heart, the image of Christ. And if it is ours now, if we have been born again, we have a foretaste of that eternal rejoicing, life's goal will be won, and we shall prove life worth living.

Charles L. Noyes.

PRAYER AND PROMISE

LUKE 11: 1-13

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find."—Luke 11: 9.

A great and glorious promise, but not by any means an unconditional one. For we must ask for what is *good*, or we shall certainly be denied, and ought to be glad to be. And we must ask in *faith*, or we shall receive only those common and lesser gifts which God bestows upon all alike, the evil and the good, the just and the unjust. And we must ask in *sincerity*, not with importunity. There is great misunderstanding at this point. God is not likened to a reluctant householder, who had to be begged and implored to get up in the night to give his neighbor three loaves of bread because a friend had come in his journey and he had nothing to set before him. "It was not a comparison but a contrast. If selfish man can be won by prayer and importunity much more certainly shall the bountiful God bestow." It is not importunity which God wants. He hears us not for our much speaking. He is not reluctant to give as that householder was to rise. He loves to give. He waits only for that attitude of heart and mind in us which makes it possible for him to give, And we must be *willing to be refused*, that is, we must ask in submission, relying upon his wisdom and goodness to decide whether the specific request shall be granted.

It is clear, therefore, that something more is needed than merely asking in order to receive. Prayer is not a

substitute for our own activity. It is not a means by which we can coax God to do our work for us. He could not afford to do so, nor we afford to have him. There are certain things which he expects us to do for ourselves and for others, and he must hold us to them or he would do us a great injury. Nor is prayer designed to change God, to make him alter his mind as if we were wiser than he. Says Robertson, "That would be a strange family where the child's will dictates; but it would be also strange where a child may not as a child express its foolish wish, if it be only to have the impossibility of granting it explained." Prayer is not designed to change God but to change us, to bring our will into submission to the divine will.

Prayer is a means of access to God, a method of approach by which we come into communion with him and are enabled not so much to get as to give,—to do, and bear, and suffer for ourselves and for others. This is not saying that special prayers are never answered, that everything has been so arranged in advance that our needs are all anticipated, and that therefore prayer is of no value except for its reflex influence upon ourselves. For if that were so the analogy of the child and its parent would not hold good as between us and God. And we cannot help feeling and believing that our prayers do affect God in some such way as the requests of our children affect us. And yet we must not consider the effectiveness of prayer to consist in what we get from God, but in what he gets out of us. The obstacles are not in him, who is perfect and powerful, able and willing to grant any reasonable request, but in ourselves, in our hearts and minds and wills.

The best possible illustration of this is furnished by the experience of Jesus in Gethsemane, when he prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass away from me," shrinking

from it with the utmost dread, as we shrink from the terrible ordeals which try our souls. How passionate our cry for deliverance! So was his. He wanted to escape that dreadful experience, and it helps us to bear our trials to see how he shrank from and yet bore his. Note the *progress* which he made during those dark hours of anguish.

He began, as we begin, by desiring that the cup should pass, but when he came to realize what the will of God was concerning him, he returned to the disciples and said with a voice of decision, "Arise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand." That is, he was prepared to go forth and meet the very thing he dreaded, and it was prayer which enabled him to do so. It was not his will but God's will which prevailed, though he rejoiced to have it prevail. The change was not in God but in him who prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass." So must it be with us. And we may rejoice that God is so firm, yet withal so kind, as to require us to come up to his standard rather than descend to ours. Hence we conclude with Robertson, "that that prayer which does not succeed in moderating our wish, in changing the passionate desire into still submission, the anxious, tumultuous expectation into silent surrender is not true prayer." Also that that life is most mature, most highly developed, "in which there is least of petition and desire, and most of waiting upon God," and conformity to his will.

What, then, should we pray for? In one sense we may pray for everything. So real is the relation between us and our heavenly Father that there is nothing which in any way concerns us which we may not make a matter of prayer. Anything which enters our life we may talk about to him as our children talk to us about what concerns them. And yet as we grow in years we shall pray more intelligently. "When I was a child, I spake as a

child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." And there is a childish way of praying which we outgrow. As we come to know the laws of nature which are fixed, and fixed for our good, we cease to pray for certain things which we once prayed for, and adjust ourselves to the situation as God intended that we should. For prayer is not primarily "a means of obtaining the good things of this life, but of learning how, if necessary, to do without them; not a means whereby we escape evil, but of becoming strong to meet it." Should not a man, then, bring his temporal affairs to God, like the farmer who prays for rain to save his crops? Yes, because if he prays aright he gains, as Professor Coe says, "more than crops. He establishes a spiritual relation which is of the utmost value."

The thing which should be primary with us is interest in the things which most interest God. Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these lesser things, and will supply them. He will not care for the birds and flowers and neglect you! He has already shown what is uppermost in his mind. He desires above everything else that his kingdom should come, that every soul should grow into the divine likeness, each helping the other to that end. He wants us to love his truth and to spread the knowledge of it and of his Son throughout the world. "Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness;" not his kingdom and our own righteousness. There is something more important than exclusive attention even to our own salvation! God's will should occupy the first place in our thoughts, and his will concerns others as well as ourselves. If we were isolated from our kind, each existing in a world by himself, we might properly seek first our own salvation. But living as we do, the whole family of man on one planet, each within easy reach of

the other, salvation becomes *social*, and prayer a means for its attainment. Not that we pray God to do our work for us, "to bring the nations into his fold, and add the heathen to his inheritance, to shortly accomplish the number of his elect," and bring about the long-desired consummation. That were too easy! If results were to be achieved in that way, God had accomplished them ages ago! Prayer that some one else will do your work is utterly useless. No one will on earth or in heaven. Each man must do his own work. Prayer is a means by which we qualify ourselves for work. Prayer is reporting each morning at headquarters. Prayer is what the tuning of an instrument is to music, what the cleaning of the flues is to the heat of a furnace,—the prelude to something else. It is the means by which the individual secures his highest efficiency.

Prayer works in harmony with law, not in violation of it. Much as God desires our spiritual growth he cannot suspend the laws of growth and bestow character upon us instead of requiring us to obtain it through obedience. We ask him to make us good! All that he can do is to help us to make ourselves good. He can give us *things* in abundance, but he cannot bestow goodness upon us, for that depends upon our own hearts and minds and wills. We have to acquire it for ourselves, by his grace, indeed, without which we should utterly fail, for no man is sufficient unto himself, but also by the exercise of our own strenuous and unremitting efforts. If we had no other use for God than for the specific things which we desired at his hands we were like the man of whom Booker Washington tells, a man who came to a negro boatman and asked him to ferry him across a certain river. The negro finding that the white man did not have the necessary three cents to pay the toll remarked that anybody who had n't three cents might as well be on one side of the

river as the other! God helps the man who helps himself.

But there is another reason why we should pray, and pray as Paul says "without ceasing," that is, with such loyalty to God that the whole of life will be "one great connected prayer." We should pray because prayer is an end in itself apart from any specific thing which can be gained thereby. Prayer establishes a relationship with God, which, to a thoughtful mind, is the supreme experience of life, a relationship too vital ever to be broken. Other experiences of life are rich and precious, but none can compare with this either for present or for prospective good. All other relationships are on a lower plane, even those of the home. We rise out of them individually and collectively into this, when singly or with others we realize the presence of God in worship. Prayer is an assurance of things unseen. It not only brings God within reach but is a realization of eternity within the limits of time. It gives us confidence concerning what is permanent in spite of everything which changes. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Prayer assures us of the Fatherhood of God and of our eternal sonship with him. For, once established, what motive could God have for destroying this relationship by the experience of death? And what were more unnatural than for us to disregard this supremest fact of our experience—fellowship with God through prayer?

Now prayer actualizes this relationship by establishing social relations between us and God. It was by virtue of this that Jesus could say, "I and the Father are one," and we can repeat his words with this understanding of their meaning, not irreverently yet well-nigh with ecstasy. So completely was Jesus at one with the Father that he could pray without ceasing, not so much for things as that his life might perfectly realize all that God desired. So

considered, prayer is the very heart of religion. Says Professor Coe, "When you have told what a man's prayers are like you have told what his religion is."

The prayerless life, then, comes little if any short of being an irreligious life, and robs the soul of communion with its God, making him an Ishmaelite instead of a prince in his Father's house.

Samuel C. Bushnell.

WATCHFULNESS

LUKE 12: 35-48

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."—Luke 12: 37.

Servants then can be blessed! This great word applies to them. Though standing in a relation of dependence, taking orders from others instead of giving orders to others, performing tasks for others instead of requiring tasks of others, they may nevertheless attain the supreme experience of life—blessedness—and by and by may win from God the recognition which is their due. "Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Not that one must wait for this recognition in order to be blessed! Blessedness may be realized in advance just as heaven may begin here below. There is some defect in our service if blessedness does not accompany it. The promise is a present one—"Blessed are those servants"—though its full consummation waits upon the future. It were strange indeed if no satisfaction attended right conduct here, if virtue were not its own reward. Great as our joys shall be hereafter we may be "blessed" here, and should be if we are to be hereafter. Why should the children of a King go mourning all their days? Why should they not prove the royalty of their lineage by living up to their high estate? It is not the trappings of royalty that make a king, but the royal mind and heart and will, the royal behavior. It is not Jesus the King sitting on his

throne, whom we chiefly honor, for we have never seen him there, but the uncrowned king, or king crowned with thorns, the kingly man, serving and suffering for his fellow men.

It is he who gives us the best illustration of his own words. When he says to his disciples, "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve," he was only requiring of them what he had already exacted of himself. Though "Lord of all" he humbled himself to be born of a virgin, and when grown to manhood esteemed no task which he could perform for others as beneath his dignity. On one occasion he asked his disciples "Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?" and then added "But I am among you as he that serveth." And he forever glorified service by showing that nothing that needs to be done is too humble a task for the most exalted. Since Jesus lived it has been enough for any right-minded man merely to know that a thing needed to be done in order to make him willing to do it. Service instead of being a mark of inferiority is a badge of honor. It confers nobility upon the servant because acceptable to and desired by God.

Whatever he wants done any man can afford to do, and will find blessedness in doing if he will do it as unto God and in love to men. To think of any work which pertains to God's universe as beneath our dignity and fit only for menials is to pass judgment upon God himself, the chief worker of all. Said Jesus, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." It were glory enough for any man that God should give him something to do! The wise man will do it with gladness, finding great joy in its performance. All he needs in order to gain inspiration for his task is to feel that the eye of God is upon him, beaming its approval, as much so as if God were there in person. We need more imagination in our religion, more of the

seeing eye and understanding ear. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching."

Why may we not bring the joy of our Lord's return into every moment of our service? If really on the watch, or—what amounts to the same thing—if conscious that he knows that we are faithful, why not take the comfort of that knowledge and do our work as if our Lord were standing by our side?

A steamship breaks down in mid-ocean. Only one man can work on the repairs at a time, and he far down in the bottom of the vessel, but with what alacrity he springs to the work when he knows that the captain has selected him for the task, and stands by his side as he works! That mechanic will remember that voyage all his days. Not only the captain and all on board but many more on shore, hundreds and thousands on both sides of the Atlantic, are waiting for that mechanic to do his work. The vessel is overdue. Why does she not arrive? Anxiety begins to be felt on every hand. Soon millions learn of it through the press. What a sigh of relief goes up when the vessel is reported "safe"! And yet is any work which God gives any man to do a whit less important? Is any doctor less worthy of praise because he does not minister at the bedside of a dying President? Is God's eye on one and not on another? and must we wait for our satisfaction until the end of life instead of finding it as we go on?

No; blessedness is promised,—joy in service—but it depends upon two things, earnestness and watchfulness. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights be burning." The long Oriental robe must be taken up and fastened under the girdle to admit of freedom in action, and the lamps must be burning as against the possible return of the master at night, the point being that the obligation to fidelity is in force every moment until the lord's return.

To have joy in service, therefore, one must be earnest and alert, faithful and watchful, performing whatever duties fall to his lot in the care of the vineyard, keeping up the property and the like, but at the same time always ready to welcome the Master who has put us in charge.

Of these two qualities, earnestness and watchfulness, the latter needs the greater emphasis. Most of us realize the importance of the former. The duty of "hustling" has been so long preached and so well practised in America that most of us live on the jump. A more strenuous people never lived. Even the rank and file of our population, those who are not thought of as at the head of the procession, are capable of a harder and steadier pull, and more accustomed to it, than any people on earth.

But when it comes to watchfulness that is almost a lost art. The whole country was caught napping on the coal strike. Only a few bought their winter supply at the usual prices. But this is only one of many illustrations. Think of the Western farm mortgages which swallowed up so much Eastern capital. Think of the tidal waves in politics, which have swept over our land. Think of the millions of failures in business in comparison with the firms in actual operation to-day. It is true that watchfulness is a hard and irksome task, something which no one would think of performing unless he felt he must to escape something worse, loss, peril, suffering, on the principle of life or fire insurance.

But in the sphere of morals and religion no one can meet the demands of watchfulness by paying an annual premium to some one else. That were too easy! We may indeed protect a church building by insurance, but who can protect the church itself, and keep it true to its Master and Lord?

When is an army ever without pickets? The sentries protect an army against itself. Leave the watch unset,

with no soldiers mounting guard, and its foes were inside rather than outside. The army has ceased to be an army and become a mob, helpless and defenceless. So it is with the church or the individual Christian when he neglects his duty and ceases to watch. It is so easy to say, "My Lord delayeth his coming," and so true! He does delay. But he left us work enough to keep us busy and expects us to perform it, rather than to sit in the porter's lodge waiting to unlock the gate when he comes.

The trouble is that we do not realize the grandeur of the work which God has given us, nor its blessedness, nor the fact that it is *our* work and concerns our own welfare in a vital way. A man on horseback at night hears the voice of a child by the wayside, stops and picks it up, only to discover when he reaches home that it is his own child that had strayed away hours before. If we could only realize that our work for others bears a vital relation to our own happiness, we should be far more watchful than we are, and every moment intent on doing our best.

And is it not beneath our dignity, in the right sense of that phrase, to do less than our best for any man? We compromise with our self-respect and curtail our happiness to the vanishing point when we substitute what is "good enough" for the best. Our Lord deserves the finest that we can do and give, and though we bestow it upon the humblest and most ill-conditioned of our fellow men it is given or withheld from him. Personally such people may be as undeserving as we are, but God's good gifts taste as well to them as to us. His luscious fruits, the grape, the pear, the orange and all the rest taste as deliciously to the poor man as to the millionaire. God gives his best to all. Surely we ought to give our best in return, and be glad that our fellows can have the benefit of our service, and the humbler the better. It requires insight to see this and goodness of heart to live up to it, but they who do are

"blessed." They know the joys of unselfishness. They enter into life with enthusiasm. They defeat the enemy without because they have first conquered their chief enemy within. They are far more watchful of themselves than of any external adversary. The thing which they have learned to guard against is their own heart. They keep it with all diligence because out of it are the issues of life.

It is in the light of our short-comings and failures that we stand rebuked. And how keen our regret when no further opportunity of service is left to us; when remorse stares at us from an open grave! Oh, the bitter words which can never be unsaid! Oh, that indifference and neglect which can never be remedied! Oh, that hardness of heart and dulness of mind which blinded us to the joys of life and turned home into a hell when it might have been an earthly annex of heaven! Then there is our disregard of the work which the Lord left in our keeping; our share of which we are so willing to leave to the minister, the deacon and the Sunday-school teacher, forgetting that we are all members of Christ's body, and should each be responsive to the call of duty, and each should rejoice in service.

Who of us but needs to be reminded of the duty of constant watchfulness?

Samuel C. Bushnell.

THE PRODIGAL SON

LUKE 15: 11-24

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord."—Hosea 6: 1.

This parable is one of the masterpieces of the great Teacher. It is the crown of the New Testament. Its purpose is to reveal the one living and true God. This it does by means of a drama. The parable is a drama in words just as Calvary is a drama in deeds. A drama is truth in life form. Truth in no other form has such power. The parable reveals God as the Father. It is the parable of divine Fatherhood. Twelve times in it is the father mentioned. The father is the chief actor. The two sons are secondary and tributary. The parts which they play are subordinate to the father. They live and move and have their highest being in the father. The father is everything in the parable. Establish the Fatherhood of God and you establish every other thing.

I say this because it is the thing to be said. I say it because men in the study of the parable popularize the prodigal son. That is not the thing to do. The thing to do is to popularize the father. That is what the Master does. He is the only one worthy of being popularized.

To put the prodigal above the father is like putting Helen Keller above Miss Sullivan, her teacher. But men do this. To the great majority, Helen Keller is their whole wonder. She is a wonder, but to me Miss Sullivan is first. If it had not been for Miss Sullivan's infinite patience, painstaking, foresight, insight, and her marvelous

self-sacrifice; if it had not been for her faith in results, her power to stoop and to draw, her ability to communicate and to elevate and to inbreathe herself, there would have been no Helen Keller. Ask Helen Keller if this be not so! Ask the prodigal son if the father is not the chief personage in the drama of his life and the only one worthy of being popularized! In the study of the parable, popularize the father and popularize no one else.

The father is God, and he is God at his best. The parable is the Master's dramatic way of saying *"God is Love."* And that is precisely what God is. He is love, and his love is deathless, and changeless. It shrinks from nothing; it suffers; it sacrifices; it grieves; it forgives; it mourns; it rejoices; it runs to meet; it kisses; it restores; it saves; and it does all these things to the uttermost. We climb up into the love of God on the stairway of human loves. I believe in the *humanity of God.* The best things in us are pictures of what he is. Jesus sums him up in these two words *"the Father."* "The Father" is the magnet that draws the alien son home from the distant land.

We rarely report to ourselves as we ought how utterly we owe to Jesus Christ our idea of God. He has revolutionized the conceptions of man just here. He has been to all of us "the way to the Father." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." If it be true that the Master came directly from "the bosom of the Father," then the wonderful things which he tells us about the divine Fatherhood of God come to us pretty straight. They are first-hand revelations.

Is his idea of God new? It is and it is not. It is not new in fact, but it is new in the setting which he gives it, and in the emphasis which he places upon it, and in the interpretation which he gives it, and in the uses which he

makes of it. He gives it a new and a fuller expression. He declares and proves that the divine love of a divine Fatherhood is a fact past all discussion.

The finest souls among the ancient covenant people possessed the idea of God as a Father. The Psalmist wrote, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." The prophet Hosea gives us the lament of God over Ephraim in which he calls him "my dear son" and in which he says that it is a veritable heartbreak for God to give him up. Jehovah said to David concerning Solomon, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." While the Father of the Old Testament was the same Father as the Father of Jesus, yet he was a Father known only to a choice few, and even to them he was but partially known. Jesus made the Father current and universal. In the Old Testament he was only occasional; in the New Testament he is perpetual. In the Old Testament "*Father*" was *a* name of God: in the New Testament "*Father*" is *the* name of God. Divine Fatherhood penetrates the New Testament through and through.

Why does the Master dwell upon the Fatherhood of God, declare it, reiterate it, argue it, prove it, illustrate it and dramatize it? For two reasons. First, it is the greatest and most wonderful fact pertaining to God; and, second, it is the hardest fact for us to realize and appreciate and enjoy. Its very glory is against it as a practical and influencing item in our faith and life. *We have to grow into it.* But to as many as receive Jesus "to them gives he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." It is with God as our divine Father as it is with our human father. We have to grow into a realizing sense of the fatherhood of our human father. This also requires culture.

An illustration will make this plain. A little book was

published lately in England under the title *"W. V., Her Book."* In it a father tells the story of his child. His interest in her is all-absorbing. He is a true father. He takes delight in every unfolding of the child's mind. Every word of hers must be thrown into a little poem. Indeed, to him, it is a little poem to start with. He must look into and study every passing mood and chronicle it in her little book, although he says pathetically, "She forgets me as soon as I am out of sight." Long months and years of extra anxiety and a great deal of parental sacrifice are required before the real spirit of childship is formed in the heart to respond to the spirit of fathership. It requires assiduous parental wooing and instruction of the little life before the father wins the child, and before he finds that the growing heart is his own—his own at last and of free choice. But the wooing and instruction are not in vain. At last the child knows her father, and admits him into her life in all its outgoings and incomings, cares for him, gives herself to him and lives for him. She is instructed into and grows into a sense of his fatherhood.

Even so, by this parable, the Master is wooing and winning us to the divine Father by giving us a thrilling revelation of what the divine Father is, and what he does.

In two ways the Master sets God before us as the Father:

I. *By a comparison.*

He institutes a comparison between God and a human father. He pictures a human father at his best, and in circumstances that are ultra and all-embracive; and when he has won us by the nobility and naturalness of his hero, he turns to us and says: "That is the true type of the true God. God is just such a Father. Expect him to act in this way in dealing with you in your sin, for this is the way he will act, if you will let him." There is no better way to an effective knowledge of God than by means of a study

of our human loves as these operate in men who are at their best.

It is, as Browning says,

> "But in completed man begins anew
> A tendency toward God."

Certainly in the world of fatherhood, God is the divine original and all fathers who are true to themselves are like him. Jesus gives an unequivocal "*Yea*" to the revelations of God which we have in ourselves. He says that the intuitions of our hearts are right and instructive Godward.

It is natural for a father to miss his absent son, and mourn his loss, and desire his return. Jacob crying out for his sons was a natural father (Gen. 42:36); and so was David when he uttered the lament of the broken heart (2 Sam. 18:33). As King and Ruler God can lose nothing, but as Father God can and does lose and suffer. He can say "*dead*" and "*lost*" of every wayward son of his, while he continues in his waywardness; just as he can say "*alive*" and "*found*" when every such son returns.

We have a striking illustration of the way God is revealed through the loves of a human father in the story of E. P. Brown, the editor of "*The Ram's Horn.*" He climbed into the faith and service of God upon the ladder of a human father. At one time he was an open and bitter atheist. He was converted under a sermon preached by Mr. Moody on "*The Prodigal's Father.*" In telling of his conversion, he says, "God got me ready for my conversion eighteen years before I heard Mr. Moody preach. At that time I was converted into a belief in the fatherhood of my own father. It came about in this way:

"When a lad, I ran away from home, but sickness and poverty and failure brought me back. I found on my return that there was not bread enough in my father's house

for himself and my mother. It was agony to stay and be a burden. I determined to go. Father begged me to stay, but I could not. His face took on the saddest look I ever saw when he started to walk a short distance with me on my departure. He had to go back soon, for he was sick and weak. As he took me by the hand he said with a voice that quavered with emotion: 'I never wanted to be rich before, my boy, as I do to-day. God knows it almost kills me to see you leaving home because your father is so poor. Come back with me and share my crust.' When he saw that my mind was fixed, he sadly said, 'Good-bye! God bless you.' He reluctantly started homeward. When he had taken a step or two he turned and I heard my name pronounced. There was a tear in his eye. It was the first I had ever seen my father shed for me. Putting his hand in his pocket he took something out and without a word he pressed a fifty-cent piece into my hand and turned and went away. It was all that he had in this world. I watched him till he passed out of sight. Then I went on my way happier than I had ever been in my life, for I had made this discovery, 'My father loves me.' I had seen his heart and for the first time. He had given me his all, and I determined that I would share with him my all. I dedicated myself and my future to him. There is one thing for which I am most grateful to God and that is this: he put it into my power to place my father and mother in a comfortable home and to relieve their later days from all temporal care. The change in my life really came when I discovered my father. There was no change in him; he always loved me; but there was a change in me, and the revelation of his fatherhood made it. When Mr. Moody preached that God was my Father, I was ready to accept God as my God; because I knew the joy of having a father. I was lifted into the arms of my divine Father by the loving arms of my human father."

II. *By a contrast.*

The Master contrasts the father with the two sons of the parable. He is the grand opposite of both of these sons in spirit and in conduct. It is the mission of these sons, the two brothers, to make the contrast, and in this way to set the mind and heart of the father into the light. Both sons were as unfilial as it was possible to be, but by the tact of a true father's love he won them both to himself, he reconciled them to each other, and restored the unity and harmony of the household. The parable closes with everybody in the house feasting.

Contrast the father and the elder son! The elder son, as he acts his part in the parable, is perfect of his kind. Nothing could be more unbrotherly than his conduct, and nothing more unfilial. Everybody knew him. No one thought of carrying him the news of his brother's return. All knew that he would be displeased. When he comes in from the fields and finds the feast inaugurated he calls one of the servants and says: "Come now, tell me tales of my father, and the worse you make them the better they will please me!" When he heard all, he was angry, oh, so angry! Could any son be in a state of greater alienation from his father?

As he represents himself, his vaunted obedience was mercenary. There was no generosity, no pity, no love in his make-up. He objected to his father's mercy. He was hard on himself, almost as hard as the prodigal was on himself. He excluded himself from a great deal that was joy-giving and uplifting. "He would not go in." In his anger he virtually renounces his sonship. He certainly does not talk like a son. He does not call his father "my father;" he does not call his brother "my brother." How the father contrasts with him! He does not forget his fatherhood nor his son's sonship. He does not resent his son's anger; he conciliates him. He maintains the

conquering silence of love in the presence of this angry railer. He acts and talks as though his son had neither said anything amiss, nor acted in an unfilial way. To him, who, in his coarseness and rage, refused to address him as "father" he used the endearing title of "son." "Son" is the father's retort to the insult that would not call him father. He includes him in all the good that has come to the home. "*Thy* brother has returned." "It is meet that *we* should be merry." His elder son thought him unfair. He said in response to this disloyal thought, "*All that I have is thine.*" As he gave to his penitent son a love welcome, so he gave to his murmuring and discontented son an insight into his rich possessions; and both treatments made them new men and new sons. Most wonderful is the power of a noble fatherhood!

Contrast the father and the younger son! The prodigal is a perfect prodigal. You cannot imagine a more causeless dissatisfaction with home and home life than his. He had everything at home, but *sin*. His going away was so cold and heartless and unfilial; yet he was permitted to go, for the father respects free will. His sinful life was perfect as a sinful life. There were no restraints in it. The "far country" with its harlots and fast young men gave him an unbounded opportunity to sin to his heart's content. Very few young men have strength of character sufficient to live rightly and purely in a "far country." The end of a life of sin as depicted here is perfect, namely, the unexpected reverses; the desertion of false friends; absolute want; slavery; drudgery; the spoliation of self; the swineherd's vocation; the painful review of the past; the scourgings of conscience; remorse; despair; the fear and the revulsion of self; the failure and the wreck.

The Master's portrayal of the utter disappointment of a prodigal's life could not be improved. Every sinful

pleasure turns out to be a pitiful mockery of the young man's deepest needs. Swan, the artist, in his great picture "*The Prodigal Son*" sets this forth in a startling way. He paints the famine and the starvation and the fierce, filthy swine, and the rags, and the emaciated youth, and the reeking sty; and then after that, with a fine touch, he paints every here and there a poppy or two—points of color to the dismal picture. Poppies, blood-red, brilliant poppies! What are these to a young man who is in the midst of death, and filth, and famine, and starvation, and the agonies of conviction? Each brilliant poppy is only a brilliant mockery, and a flashing satire. The contrast of its vain beauty is an agony. It is nothing and worse than nothing.

There was nothing for the prodigal to do save that which he did do, namely, to arise and go home to his father. But why should he be received? The law comes in here —the law of the fitness of things. This is precisely what the elder brother said, "Shall he be received?" Trust the father for that. Fatherhood is over law and stronger than law. With God as with man, "*love is the fulfilling of the law.*" In the realm of fatherhood *it is law* for the father to forgive and receive his returning prodigal son. This is the only way the father can have power over his children. It is as the Hebrew Psalmist says:

> "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,
> O Lord, who shall stand?
> But there is forgiveness with thee,
> That thou mayest be feared."

The forgiveness of the father is the source of the father's power and influence.

This is the only way the father can bless himself, and satisfy himself. Let him act otherwise, and he will punish himself and fill his life with torture. The New

York Tribune the other day told the story of a boy who through his wildness was sent to the Island as a prisoner. He wrote his father asking him to secure his release. As no answer came he wrote a second letter and a third. He told his father that the place was such that he would not allow his dog to be kept there. The father turned a deaf ear to his son's entreaties. He said, "He has made his own bed and he must lie in it." Feeling the agony of neglect, the boy tried one night to swim over to the city. He failed in his attempt and was drowned. His dead body was sent home to his father. When the father saw it, he fainted. The consciousness to which they brought him back was a consciousness of insufferable grief. He cried so that they could hear him a block away, "O my poor boy! I could have saved him and I would not. I was deaf to his entreaties. May God forgive me! I have killed my own son. My God! My God!" His grief broke his heart and that very day he died. There is only one way in which a true father can act and not do violence to himself; and that is the way the father of the parable acted. It is this: to forgive and receive and love and bless the returning penitent. "The father saw him afar off, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him." The father has rights. It is his right to so act that he shall be happy.

The thought pertaining to God, the divine Father, which all this teaches, is plain. It is this: He will not make the mistake of the foolish, unforgiving earthly father. God suffers. *He will not build for himself an everlasting hell.* No course of conduct that contradicts the best in us can logically be thought of in connection with God. God must act in such a way as will give himself pleasure. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

What will satisfy God in regard to his prodigal son? Nothing but his return to the home, and that in his right mind. His *punishment* will not. The punishment of Absalom was a sweet morsel to Joab; but what was it to David? It was a broken heart. God is more like David to each one of us than like Joab. Surely when the father of the parable uttered that peal of imperatives, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found," he was acting naturally, and in a way to bless himself and win the full heart and loyalty of his son. There was nothing in this for the father to regret, and nothing for the prodigal to resent.

Prodigal son, there is nothing in the way of your returning home to God. There are no such words as "*too late*" written on the dial-plate of the great clock that ticks the passage of the hours in your divine Father's house; therefore, come home. Come at any hour.

May God baptize us all into a fearless faith in his love, and may he reveal that love to us more and more. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father . . . that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

David Gregg.

JESUS TEACHES HUMILITY

MARK 10: 35-45

"And there come near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee," etc.

The Master and his disciples "were in the way, going up to Jerusalem" together, but their souls were worlds apart. As we read this narrative, we are impressed by the contrast between the movement of the thought of Jesus and the dreams of his followers. As the end of his ministry approached, his mind was intent upon the cross that awaited him, and its meaning. Many students of the New Testament have noted the progress in his teaching concerning himself, apparently corresponding to a deepening consciousness of his Messianic mission, and a growing intensity of purpose to accomplish it. In his early ministry he is reticent about himself. He is clear and emphatic when he speaks of God or of the new kingdom and its laws, but he says little of himself, and that little rather in parables and suggestions than explicit statements. "He appears to have desired," says Dr. Fairbairn, "that their conception of him should be of their own forming rather than of his communicating, a belief reached through the exercise of their own reason and not simply received on his authority."

But now the time has come to ask what result they have reached. "Who say ye that I am?" And after Peter's great confession, there is not only a new emphasis

upon his person, but there is also a new teaching about his coming passion. Only after this declaration of his Messiahship does it begin to be recorded that "he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him." But now this amazing statement is often upon his lips. As they come down from the Mount of Transfiguration, filled with thoughts of his glory, he repeats it. As they stand in awe at the exhibition of his power in the healing of the demoniac child, again this solemn prophecy sounds in their ears. Four times in three chapters does Mark record this repeated prediction of coming defeat and death, in connection with such displays of majesty and might. Silenced by the emphatic rebuke of Peter, they are bewildered by words so far beyond their present comprehension. "They understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him."

Mark pictures with his usual graphic touch the little company on their way, the Master in front, silent and absorbed, and the disciples following in amazement and fear. But while he is thus brooding over the mighty mysteries that surround the tragedy he sees awaiting him at Jerusalem, whither are their thoughts tending? Intent upon their selfish ambitions they are scheming for the positions of influence and power in the new kingdom, and at length the sons of Zebedee muster courage enough to break in upon his musings with their ambitious request. What a rude awakening! How his spirit must have recoiled as he descended from those high regions of his thought to this murky atmosphere of self-seeking! Yet their faith in the success of his kingdom was grateful, and with divine patience he answers their plea and explains the way to eminence among his followers.

The whole passage sets forth vividly, by the action of the disciples as well as by the teaching of the Master, the

radical contrast between Jesus' attitude toward the world and that which men are wont to assume. It illustrates and enforces certain fundamental truths.

I. *Service is the universal law of Christ's kingdom.*

The separation between the Lord and his followers here is not alone nor chiefly mental. It is moral and ethical. It is true that they are evidently ignorant of the nature of his kingdom. The ready assurance with which they declare their readiness to share his cup and baptism is well described by Dr. Fairbairn as "the courage of the childish or the drunken who use words but do not know what they mean. If John ever recalled this moment, and looked at it through the memories of the passion, he must have experienced shame and humiliation of a kind which it is good even for saints to feel." But their ignorance was due to the self-seeking spirit that blinded their eyes.

Selfishness is natural to man. It is nature's law of self-preservation that one's own interests shall be first regarded. The child is the supreme egotist. He lays hold on everything within reach by a law of eminent domain. Sun, moon, stars, and all earthly treasures and folk exist for his amusement and gratification. The recognition of the rights of others comes sometimes only after a long and painful process of training, and unselfishness is the crowning grace of character. All men delight in the exercise of power. The genial Autocrat of The Breakfast Table tells us that this lies at the basis of our games, our pleasures and our serious pursuits. A part of the joy of riding is the sense of control over the animal you bestride. The ready response of the muscles to the mandates of the will contributes to the enjoyment of athletic sports. Wealth is sought for the power it brings. In modern life, money is crystallized force; a dollar is power in the tabloid form. The love of power gives zest to the game of politics; the enjoyment of power intoxicates the orator and the actor;

the author seeks to convince the mind and sway the heart of the people; the inventor, to make nature more obedient to human will. Because man's control over the hidden forces of the world is greater than ever before, the field of pleasure has been greatly extended in modern times. But no other exercise of power gives such subtle pleasure as control over our fellow men. It gratifies pride, flatters self-esteem, and tempts to ever greater assumptions. Few are they who can be trusted not to abuse such power. Men make it a measure of greatness, and sacrifice before its altars.

In contrast with this standard and ideal Jesus sets forth that of service. Power is to be used for human helpfulness and not for selfish ends. He who serves most is greatest of all. In contrast with the supremacy of selfishness he exalts the supremacy of love. Selfishness has been analyzed by Professor Samuel Harris as composed of self-sufficiency, self-will, self-seeking and self-righteousness. Instead of self-sufficiency, Jesus writes over the very doorway of his kingdom, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Without that humility which recognizes its own spiritual helplessness and seeks aid from above no man can see the kingdom. Instead of self-will, he makes the will of God the supreme law of the world. It is self-seeking that is especially condemned in this passage,—desire in the place of love, the putting of self in the place of God and our fellow men as the end of all endeavor and the recipient of all service. And the self-righteousness of the Pharisees is constantly rebuked in Jesus' teaching. The redemption of man means the breaking down of this spiritual primacy of self. The spirit of sacrificial love must replace it. No wonder that such a revolution in human standards is called a new creation and that to attain it a new birth is declared necessary.

II. *Acceptance of this principle of loving service is the test of discipleship.*

So the Master here declares. These men shall indeed drink of his cup and share his baptism. Into the fellowship of service and sacrifice they shall fully enter, and by means of it shall they be ennobled. Every one of them except Judas was thus transformed. And when this same John, the son of Zebedee, in his old age, would give to his followers a touchstone by which true disciples may be discerned, it is this test that he commends: Every one that loveth is begotten of God." This is the decisive evidence of the new birth. If any man shows a Christlike love for men, he is of the seed royal, he bears the marks of the King's household. And lest there should be any uncertainty as to his meaning, the apostle proceeds to define and illustrate this love in terms of the sacrifice of Christ (1 John 4:7-12). In that solemn picture of the judgment with which the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew closes, the Master himself declares that this same test of loving service, in the name of Christ, is the final proof of true discipleship.

The acceptance of this rule of loving service transforms all human relationships. In his "Outlines of Social Theology," President Hyde traces its workings through marriage, business, politics, science and art, and shows how man's common life may thus minister to the highest ends. This new spirit and temper make all things new for him who accepts Christ's law of service, and without it no man can see, much less enter into, the kingdom of heaven. And the general acceptance of this principle would make "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Through this spirit and not by means of any social panacea lies the way for the redemption of human society.

III. *The life and death of Jesus Christ furnish the supreme illustration of this principle and the supreme motive to its adoption.*

The climax of this passage is in its closing words:— "For verily the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." This is not an isolated brilliant, but the logical completion of the teaching. The principle he has laid down is interpreted by his own example. Heretofore he has spoken of his death simply as a coming event. The hatred of his enemies will surely compass it. But now he discloses its meaning. It is a voluntary sacrifice; by means of it many are to be delivered; it is, therefore, the inevitable and fitting end of his whole life service. The law for the servant is also the law for the Master; the spirit of the King is the rule of the kingdom. The humility which he commends is not meanness of spirit but greatness of soul; not a false estimate of our powers that tempts us to shrink from service and decline the rightful task, but rather a loftiness of soul that ceases to think of self, a love that glorifies all service and makes sacrifice a joy. It is content to find in every service the will of the Father, and to await in confident faith the disclosure of his good pleasure.

But how is such a spirit to be wrought into this human fiber? How shall men be delivered from the bondage of selfishness?

"Self is the only prison that can bind the soul."

To set men free from that prison-house the Son of man came to give his life. Many theological battles have been fought over the precise meaning of the word "ransom" in this passage. Is it a price paid to buy man off from the dominion of Satan? or a debt paid to God? or a satisfaction due to offended justice? or the means of deliverance from the world? There is nothing in the passage itself that compels us to define the application of the figure. The kingdom of Christ is contrasted with earthly empires. In

them the prince covets power and the people are enslaved. But in the heavenly kingdom, the Master of all is the servant of all and gives his life to make his people free. The emphasis is on the general idea that men are not free to live this holy and unselfish life and that the life and death of Jesus are the means of their deliverance. Here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, the tremendous fact of redemption is asserted, without attempt to explain just *how* that emancipation is wrought. To deny the fact is to deny the fundamental truth of the Gospel and the testimony of all Christian experience. But to acknowledge that a mystery of "light inaccessible and full of glory" surrounds this central fact of redemption, and that when we look upon it "we are in the presence of forces which issue from infinity, and pass out of our sight even while we are contemplating their effects,"[1] is equally in accord with Christ's declaration to Nicodemus and with the confessions of all the literature of the Christian religion.

The effect of the atoning life and death of Christ is described in the New Testament by various figures, of which these five are the most frequent:—a sin-offering, a ransom, a satisfaction, the payment of a debt, and a reconciliation. These describe vividly different aspects of the results it produces,—the cleansing from sin, the deliverance from slavery, the justification before the law and the assurance of God's good pleasure. In our text the emphasis is laid upon the sense of deliverance from the bondage of selfishness and sin, and the new kinship with the Master in the service of mankind. Such loving service becomes possible only because we are delivered from sin and become "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." The supreme motive to such service is found not only in the example

[1] *Lux Mundi p. 237.*

of the King, but in the grateful love which his sacrifice awakens, and in the transforming power of the new spirit which he imparts.

This law of the greatness of service is becoming more and more the standard by which human achievements are judged. Not even the genius of a Napoleon can blind the eyes to his moral littleness. Statesmen, warriors, scholars, inventors, explorers, physicians, ministers of state and of the church, captains of industry and men and women of humbler station,—all are great, not as they win for themselves fame or gold or passing honor, but as they serve the world in their several ministries, making life freer, more wholesome, brighter, purer and happier. And they who serve their day and generation according to the will of God in this spirit are an increasing host, preparing the way for the kingdom of God on earth.

Shall we say, then, that the question of the sons of Zebedee has no place in the minds of disciples? Are we to have no look "unto the recompense of reward?" The Master did not deny their request for positions of honor. He had made definite and large promises of future reward, in answer to Peter's query. But he declared that the rewards of the kingdom are not favors arbitrarily bestowed. They are the inevitable consequence of service and suffering. They who serve most will have largest joy in the fruitage of service and sacrifice. For them this reward is prepared. It cannot be otherwise with rewards which must be spiritual and not material. And the spirit in which the brethren at that moment were seeking reward was exactly the opposite of that which must be the recipient of heavenly honors. It is impossible to pour an infinite spiritual treasure into a contracted and selfish heart. Hear the closing words of Ruskin's "Modern Painters," an impressive comment on this passage:—

"So far as you desire to possess rather than to give; so far

as you look for power to command instead of to bless; . . . so long as the hope before you is for supremacy instead of love; and your desire is to be greatest instead of least,—first instead of last—so long you are serving the Lord of all that is last and least; the last enemy that shall be destroyed—Death; and you shall have Death's crown, with the worm coiled within it; and Death's wages, with the worm feeding on them."

Edward McArthur Noyes.

THE PASSOVER

MATT. 26: 17-30

"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."—1 Cor. 5: 7.

Our subject is the Passover; but one particular celebration, the one partaken by our Saviour with his apostles in the week of his crucifixion, of which he said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15)—the last passover.

Every Hebrew child was to be taught the meaning of the passover, as the central fact in the history of his people. Every disciple of Christ, every citizen of his kingdom should know, as fully as he may, the meaning of the last passover.

We have four accounts of this passover, in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and a brief account by Paul (1 Cor. 11: 23-26). These accounts, while substantially alike, show marked differences. The account of John is by itself. The passage from Paul, in the ground which it covers, is practically identical with that in Luke.

In the treatment of the subject, all the accounts will be consulted.

I. *Unsolved questions raised by the narratives.*

A good deal of time has been spent by scholars upon what may be called unsolved questions. For example, Who was the man at whose house the passover was celebrated? Was it Nicodemus? or Joseph of Arimathæa? or some other rich disciple? the size of the upper room suggesting that he must have been a rich man. Or was it

some one not a disciple? Traditions favor the view that it was Joseph of Arimathæa. But the question is unsolved and unsolvable. The room in Jerusalem is shown but whose it was is as dubious a tradition as the chamber itself.

Another question is more important. Did our Saviour and his disciples eat the passover supper at the regular time, or at a special (earlier) time? If they did not eat it at the regular time, so carefully prescribed at its institution, as described in Exodus, on the fifteenth of the month Nisan, but on the eve of the fourteenth, as the writers of the first three gospels agree, was the meal, in any true sense, a passover? A great deal of labor and learning have been spent upon this question, and a great deal of religious (and irreligious) heat generated, and it must be added, without the reaching of any solution in which students generally agree.

In a sense this is an important question; in a true sense it is not very important. Dean Alford, after going over all the accessible evidence very elaborately, and confessing his hopelessness of reaching a conclusion, thus sums up the case: (1) "Jesus and his disciples partook of a meal in the passover week. (2) In some sense or other this meal was regarded as the eating of the passover. (3) It was not the ordinary passover of the Jews." This is one of the Biblical difficulties which Sunday-school teachers and the ordinary Bible student will wisely deal with by the excellent practical rule of an eminent minister: "Face it boldly and pass on." Undoubtedly a second meal was eaten at an earlier time than the regular prescribed time, and in some truest sense it was regarded as a passover. It may be added that in the ritual of the passover there was a provision for its being observed a month later than the historic date.

II. *Incidents connected with this passover which were sig-*

nificant and important, but to be grouped, on the whole, as incidents.

(1) The preparation for the supper. Our Saviour sent disciples to make the needed preparation. Mark and Luke tell us that two were sent. Luke gives their names: Peter and John. They were guided to the unnamed man's house by another unnamed man bearing a pitcher of water; the water, it is ingeniously suggested by commentators, being for the mixing of the unleavened bread of the passover. The request by the Saviour for a room was nothing unusual. At the passover season the people of Jerusalem and its environs expected to be universally called upon for hospitality to passover companies. The main feature of the preparation was the gathering of materials for the sacred meal: a lamb (already secured, at least three days earlier) which was to be killed in the forecourt of the temple, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, wine mixed with water, and also a dish of fruit mingled with vinegar in which the sop was dipped. These materials were to be arranged upon the table in the room to be provided.

(2) Another incident of the meal was the time. It was at evening, or "between the evenings;" between twilight and dark, or, as others have interpreted, between three o'clock and sunset.

(3) Still another incident, mentioned by all four of the evangelists and of most important significance, was the warning of the Saviour, as they were grouped around him at the table, that one of them should betray him. In the intense scene which followed, as, in a passion of amazement and grief, one by one they asked him, "Is it I?" "Lord, is it I?" even Judas asked, "Is it I?" and had the sign given him, and learned that his awful treason was known to his Master.

(4) Another circumstance is mentioned: the disciples

disputed among themselves as to which of them should be the greatest. There! At the table! Our Saviour rebuked them, and used the unseemly incident to impress upon them the law of service, the lesson so vividly inculcated, as John records it, by the washing of the disciples' feet. "I am among you," he said, "as he that serveth." Though but an incident in its relation to the passover, this dispute and the teaching which our Lord connected with it make one of the principal lessons of the narrative.

III. *Relation of the Lord's Supper to the Passover.*

It was distinct from it. It was instituted in connection with it. It was substituted for it. Elements of the passover were used, but a new rite was instituted with a new meaning—the Lord's Supper. The full descriptive title of this passover would be: "The Last Passover and the First Lord's Supper." In describing the institution of the Lord's Supper, all the accounts agree. The following is a harmonized account, made up from the four narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul.

"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed and brake it, and giving to the disciples, said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner, also, he took the cup when he had supped, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them: and they all drank of it. And he said to them, This cup is the new testament in my blood shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

IV. *The significance of the last passover.*

The Jewish passover had a twofold significance: as a feast for the first fruits of the harvest, and a historical commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from the

last plague, and from the bondage in Egypt. It was also a prophetic commemoration of a great future redemption. In the new rite the former part of the meaning, the reference to the harvest, was dropped. Its purpose was made exclusively historical. And in this purpose it was limited: to commemorate the coming and the sacrifice of the foretold Redeemer, and his final coming to complete his redeeming work. "With this it taught the befitting temper and purity of heart through which redemption might be gained."

This is a summary statement of the significance of the last passover. We consider its significance more in detail.

(1) The passover was a sacrifice, not in the form at the first, but later in the form—always in the spirit. The lamb, the blood of the lamb, expressed the remission of sins. The lamb in the last passover, the Lord's Supper, is a sacrifice. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." It expressed the taking away of sins. When Jesus Christ is called the Lamb of God, the reference is to all the Biblical teaching concerning the lamb as a sacrifice: the lamb of the morning and evening offering, but especially the paschal, or passover lamb. The central thought in our Saviour's memorial is salvation, the remission of sins.

(2) One who partook of the passover must be prepared. All leaven or ferment must be put out of the house. With the utmost care the house must be searched and all leaven removed. He who partakes of the Lord's Supper must be prepared by putting away all sin. Leaven represents sin, hence the charge in the Golden Text and the following verse: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

(3) The blood of the passover lamb was sprinkled upon the doorways of the Hebrew houses. Only as sprinkled was it efficacious. Thus it was visible, for the angel to see, for Jehovah to see. It was a *confession* of need, and also of faith in the provision for deliverance. So only as the blood of the Lamb of God is applied to the heart, as if sprinkled, has it efficacy for the remission of sins. In the Lord's Supper *confession* is made of need, and of faith in God's remedy for sin. In it we testify our faith that without the shedding of the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, there is no remission.

(4) The passover lamb was to be eaten. The Lord's Supper is to be eaten. We need pardon from Christ. We need to *partake* Christ. In the sixth chapter of John the Saviour developed this meaning of the Supper, that we must partake of him. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," (John 6 : 53) ; which is equivalent to the teaching of Paul : "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The supper expresses the spiritual fact that the man who partakes it partakes Christ, shares the life of Christ, has thus a new life.

(5) The passover blood was the seal of a testament or covenant in which God engaged with every one who received it, to give him all the blessings which it represented. So the blood of Christ, our passover, is the seal of a covenant that God will give to every one who, in the true spirit, receives it, all the blessings represented by it : pardon, life, heaven. And so the Saviour as he took the cup said, "This cup is the new covenant, in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." It is the seal of a covenant between God and Christ. It is the seal of a covenant between God and Christ and the communing disciple. Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. I, his disciple, shall be satisfied.

(6) The passover was partaken staff in hand, with the loins girded, all ready for a midnight pilgrimage, to depart in haste. At the Lord's Supper we express our Christian faith, but with this recognition of the place of Christian service: the relation of true piety and Christian activity. We are on the way to new and better service. Attention has already been called to this idea among the *incidents* of the last passover, in the reference to the rebuke of the disciples for disputing as to who should be greatest, the washing of the disciples' feet and the great teaching of service. Always this thought is to be put in the forefront in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Saviour says anew, as he takes the bread, "This is my body." And anew, as we receive it, we say, "We, thy Church, are thy body," to serve. Again, whenever we commune, may we hear Jesus say, "I am among you as he that serveth;" and respond with his Church, "*I* am among you as he that serveth;" ever finding at our Lord's table the motive for new and humbler and fuller service.

(7) The passover meal was partaken by families. The Saviour and his disciples were a family group. The church is a family. We share together. A prominent association in the Lord's Supper is fellowship. We share the need, we share the preparation, we share the covenant, we share the confession, we share the service, we share the redemption, we share the hope. The church is a household. The members of his family share all that is represented in our Saviour's memorial.

(8) The passover expressed emancipation. The Hebrews had been slaves. They were set free. Free! Freed by the blood as a symbol of the passover lamb. In that passover night they went out of their blood-sealed houses, out of Egypt, a nation of freemen. Of this deliverance the passover, thereafter, was a simple, great historical memorial. The blood of Jesus Christ sets his peo-

ple free from sin and death. We were in bondage. At the Lord's table we celebrate the emancipation of the soul from sin and death.

These are main particulars of the significance of the last passover, the Lord's Supper.

In conclusion I cannot do better than to quote a passage which connects with this last passover, a striking argument for the divine authority of the Scriptures:

"The parallel is so perfect, even in its minutest details, that one needs no better evidence of the spiritual unity of the Old and New Testaments, and the spiritual significance and typical character of the sacrificial system of the former dispensation, than a comparison of the Jewish passover with the Christian redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ, of which he made memorial in the Lord's Supper, toward which the great Jewish feast for so many centuries and so steadily, pointed the Jewish nation."

George R. Leavitt.

CHRIST'S TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

MARK 15: 1-15

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him up to Pilate. . . . . But Jesus no more answered anything; insomuch that Pilate marvelled."

I think you cannot understand the bearing of Jesus in his trial before Pilate without a key to the inner meaning of it all. So I shall take a text, 1 Peter 3: 18, which opens a full view of what lies back of the scenes: "Christ also suffered [died] for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God."

What a tremendous implication is in those last words, "that he might bring us to God!" What has his dying to do with *that!* Could he not "bring us to God" by *living?* Was not his life of goodness, was not his surpassing way of putting truth, was not his transcendent character, his most winsome and effective example, enough to "bring us to God"? "He died . . . that he might bring us to God."

The arraignment before Pilate is a point in his ministry well suited to show why "He died . . . that he might bring us to God."

Three parties stand forth in the trial: the man Christ Jesus, the Roman governor, and the crowd of accusers. A fourth appears in the background—the people. There is a fifth also; unseen, voiceless, his shadow only showing; Barabbas was a party to the transaction in dramatic reserve.

The hostility to Jesus had now reached a deadly point. The chief priests were in action against him. Take the closing chapters of each of the gospels and note how the words "chief priests" come into constant use. This is highly significant. It has not been so before. In the preceding parts of the gospels the Pharisees and the scribes are the chief enemies of Jesus. It is they who hound him all through his ministry among the people. As teachers of the law, as devotees of the traditional, as what we should call "champions of orthodoxy," as zealous propagandists, they naturally were the ones to feel that the new teacher of the people, with his independent, new way of putting things, was trespassing on their peculiar province. Often had they joined issue with him before the people. Often had they baffled his influence, foiled his teaching, turned the fickle people against him—the man whose winsome touch had stirred their peasant hearts with strange gladness.

Unflinchingly Jesus had stood up against them. He had persisted in his brave appeal to the dormant sense of right and appreciation of what is true and good, deep in the heart of the people.

And be it said fairly and pointedly, the great, courageous optimism of Jesus was being vindicated in a measure, partial as the response of the people was, wayward and unstable. For it was the Pharisees who at length "said among themselves" these words of unwilling testimony: "Behold how ye prevail nothing: lo, the world is gone after him." There is a vindication of the aim and hope of Jesus as regards the people in those words; yes, and indirectly there is a vindication of the common heart of the people, too. Every pessimist, every discouraged toiler for what is good and true ought to face and contemplate that registered demonstration that Jesus was right in his hope and courage about the average man. Jesus was actually winning his way with the people.

Pause now to ponder this question: What might have been the issue of Christ's life if he had been left unopposed to work out his natural achievements for good in the hearts and lives of the common people of his time? What if he had been left to round out sixty or seventy years of life among men? Amplifying his teaching, what might have been the measureless enlightenment of the world's thought? Extending his influence, impregnating his generation, maturing the results of his teaching in Palestine, going thence to the cities afterward visited by his follower Paul,—think what might have been achieved by a quarter century more of such teaching as his in the world centers of Greece and Rome! Would not Jesus the good, Jesus the wise, be a transcendent figure among all "who live again in minds made better by their presence"? Would he not have drawn forth "the better self" in men and women on a vast scale? Would not the human faculty for seeing and appreciating and responding to what is best have asserted itself? Would not Jesus the spiritual seer, Jesus the matchless teacher, Jesus the supreme character, the topmost man, have been as certain and as abiding as Gibraltar? There are not a few throughout Christendom—and about our Boston the number seems extra large and influential—who are set on viewing Jesus in this way precisely.

But is this view tenable, is it adequate, is it mindful of all the data in the case, and, so, rational? It is held as philosophical, scholarly. Is it not quite the opposite because it ignores a complete set of facts? Christ's view of himself, his mission, his destiny, distinctly leaves behind as partial these phases of his ministry. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." That "if" is a vast disclosure. He himself felt that all behind him was not enough. "The Son of man *must* suffer . . . and be rejected . . . and be killed . . . and . . . be raised." Leave out these things and you leave out what Christ himself

deemed indispensable. That is, one can minify the cross and the resurrection and take Jesus simply as the chief of men in wisdom, goodness and the like, only by impeaching and discrediting his own ultimate judgment of what men needed, his own deepest conviction of his own function in behalf of men. That is, the cross of Christ must be the chief factor in his power, else the very wisdom and spiritual insight on which his supremacy would otherwise rest, is itself uncovered as a flaw. The cross, impressed on the thought of Jesus, is the mark which either fixes on the point of his highest wisdom or the point of his one grave blunder. For deliberately "He died . . . that he might bring us to God."

Our Lord must have seen how the appeal of what was true and right in him and in his teaching was finding its way home to what is good in men. He must have felt how loyally that unextinguishable sense of right in the common heart of humanity was responding to his appeals. If the people were in error in their understanding and expectations, yet he would surely remember that the two or three years was but a short time to teach them. In ten years or twenty or thirty how he might have illumined and fecundated their minds!

Ah, he saw that there was a deeper appeal still to be made! How deliberately, how patiently, how firmly he squared himself to that deeper task! He must make his appeal to what is bad in man as well as what is good, if he would "bring us to God." He was ready for the sufferings that were to follow his ministry among the people. Men did not outwit him and force him to it. He was ready. He was willing. "He died . . . that he might bring us to God."

So it was when the Pharisees and scribes, outdone before the people who "hung upon him, listening," turned in desperation to the chief priests. So it was when the chief

priests, aroused to action, laid their embittered net of hate and drew him in and made quick work of a politic charge and rushed him before Pilate, the arm of detested Rome. So it was when Pilate, enmeshed in his own political problems, questioned the defenseless man alone and marveled that he held his peace with the babel of the mob outside sounding in their ears. So it was when Pilate wabbled pitiably. Jesus made no effort to influence the governor. The people were now crying out against him, manipulated into blind frenzy by the chief priests whom the Pharisees and scribes had manipulated. The incarnated badness of humanity might now go on and manipulate the incarnated power of the world. "My kingdom is not of this world." They may handle Pilate. Jesus was ready—ready to let the bad in men work itself out to full expression—ready to let humanity reveal itself on its nether side that so the inmost need might be uncovered and the Christ might reach to the depths of that need. He was ready to die that he might reach to the bottom of men's need. He felt that nothing short of his own death at the hands of bad men could show the sin of men fully. His deep, brooding spirit was shot through with the conviction that nothing short of his death for the plea he came to make could reach the depths of sinful humanity's need and give the touch that would so transform the sin that it would drive the sinner to the heart of God instead of away from it. I think these words express the deepest thing I know about the mind of Christ. So it was that he was silent before Pilate. The batteries of his resistless speech no longer poured forth words to the confusion and rout of his foes as in former days. The trumpet-call of his clear, mighty wisdom no longer sounded to rally the higher manhood of the man before whom he stood and make Pilate withhold his hand as did the officers who once returned without arresting him, saying, "Never man so spake." Jesus was

silent now. And that silence has depths of meaning beyond words. Nineteen centuries touched by the magic of Christ's conquering cross have only begun to open to view the abysses of the meaning of that silence. The sounding-line of history, fathoming the ever deeper and deeper tides of human need, human thought and human action, was dropped in that silence by his pinioned hands, and the plummet that weighted and drew it down, down through all depths was the cross—the cross! "He died . . . that he might bring us to God."

William Allen Knight.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED

MARK 15: 22-39

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."—1 Cor. 15: 3.

Man at his best has always given gifts to God. Wherever the traces of social life are found the altar of sacrifice is the most enduring and the central fact. Sacrifice is a universal language by which men have uttered their deepest thought to the Power not themselves, and thereby have become more truly themselves. It is an expression of a sense of fear arising from weakness dependent upon strength, and of guilt before purity. It is an expression of justice springing from a consciousness of sin and the moral law. It is an expression of a sense of love, and the grateful acknowledgment of mercy and providence. Sacrifice has thus been propitiation, expiation and reconciliation. It has been a liturgy for the eye, adapted to an unreflecting people. The Hebrew nation gained its culture in religion in the kindergarten training of the lamb slain upon the altar, and the goat on whose head sinful hands were laid that he might bear the sins of the people when driven off into the wilderness. The offering of sacrifices was a master plan for worship. It emphasized the purification of the soul before one could draw near to God.

The highest form of sacrifice has always been found in the gift of life. "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." Cain's dead sacrifice had not the same meaning that Abel's lamb conveyed. To be sure, the lamb was

slain. But it was not killed to suffer penalty. It was only symbolizing life by its blood. Blood did not mean to the ancient mind *death* so much as life. Blood was the vehicle of life, the special abode of its principle. And the offering of a living sacrifice was the pouring out of blood as the essential thing before God to typify a life renewed, refreshed and cleansed. The Hebrew word signifying the service of blood in sacrifice means to cover. "It is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life," says the law in Leviticus. The old tribesman of the desert, and his modern uncivilized brother in the heart of Africa, make blood covenant with a friend. The African chief opened his own veins to receive blood from Mr. Stanley's arm, and transfused his own into his white brother's system, that they might be one blood, one life. The old idea of sacrifice was closely akin to this conception, and the spotless, perfect victim, full of strength and unsullied life, gave to those on whom his blood was sprinkled the refreshing and the cleansing that they needed. The rite suggests a romantic recognition of the close bond that unites animal life to man. Almost every religion that appreciates the curse of sin has developed the bloody sacrifice. Professor Curtis of Chicago found it still observed among the Samaritans of upper Palestine last summer when he wandered among them and witnessed many of their rites.

The Jewish Scriptures nowhere teach expiation. The death inflicted upon the sacrifice was not looked upon as the penalty of sin. The whole emphasis was placed in the life of the unblemished creature that was to be a cover for sin and a renewal for the sinner. At the great feast of the atonement the priest took two kids. One was slain, and his blood was sprinkled before God, as if his innocent life were covering the unsightly life that offered sacrifice. The other kid was taken alive and on his head the priest laid his hands confessing all the sins of the people, now

covered by the life already sacrificed. Then the goat was sent forth into the wilderness alive, bearing the sins that God no longer counted against the people, so that there might be a chance for the new life in them to succeed. Here is no idea of expiation, nor one word to suggest the pain of death as a penalty for sin. The controlling idea is that of life made pure and vigorous, freed from hindrances and stains.

There is evidently a development to be traced in the Old Testament from reliance upon sacrifice to an impatience with it, as the spiritual nature grew among the leaders of the people. Hear the prophets' stern rebuke in Isaiah and Hosea. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." "For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." It is matched by the Psalmist's cry, "Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." "For thou delightest not in sacrifice: else would I give it: thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Here is a higher sentiment and a finer sense of reality, more like our own. From One greater than the prophets we have learned the lesson that no sacrifice is comparable with the clean heart and the right spirit within us. We have also learned that life is not cut free from sacrifice, but rather is demanding it with stronger emphasis to-day than ever. It is a prophet of our day, of our own age and speech, who has proclaimed, "It is only with renunciation that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin." "In the valiant suffering for others, not in a slothful making of others suffer for us, did nobleness lie."

And another modern voice has proclaimed, "There is but one solitary virtue in the world,—the eternal sacrifice of self." This is the Christian note.

Christ is the consummation and correction of all sacrifice. Frequently we have lost his message through the entangling alliance we have made between the partial foreshadowing of his sacrifice and his own thought about it. Christian thinkers have been betrayed into an explanation of Christ's sacrifice by the crude anticipations of it in the past. St. Paul and the author of the Hebrews used familiar forms for illustration that we have changed from metaphor into dogma. Christ has, in fact, superseded all sacrifice by his life and sufferings and death. His work reveals the infinite kindness of the heart of God who needs no bribery of offerings to render him propitious. In Christ God himself is acting beyond the farthest dream of man, by the incarnation that ends in death. Eastern religions, it has been said, begin with God and seek to bring him down to man. Western religions start with man and seek to lift him up to God. Christianity is the mediator between the two, and in the Son God brings the Father near his children, and exalts the children to share the Father's life.

Christ also shows the only offering that can be acceptable to God. For he offers himself, confessing the evil of sin, consenting to God's holy will in punishment of sin, and entering by self-sacrifice into the fellowship of his redeeming purpose. Sacrifice, then, is needless for all men who know Christ, in any sense of purchasing the benevolence of God. Yet it is indispensable for every one of us, as it was in Christ himself. A gospel of the early Ebionitic sect quotes Jesus as saying, "I have come to abolish sacrifices, and if ye do not cease from sacrificing the wrath of God will not cease from you."

For at least six centuries after the gospels were written,

the Christian Church did not think of offering the body and blood of Christ as a sacrifice. The people came together bringing gifts, and afterwards partook of the communion. In accordance with the habit of the country, they brought the fruits of the earth, bread and wine, and emptied their small phials into large bowls provided by the church, and stored their loaves in bags. Later on, as conditions changed, these gifts were represented by money by which the officers of the church purchased bread and wine as it was needed. This was the sacrifice. It was a separate portion of the service. After it, they celebrated the communion. A passage in the New Testament suggests this order, where men bringing their gifts before the altar and remembering that they had aught against any one, are commanded to leave their gifts before the altar and go and be reconciled first with the brethren. In the eighth and ninth centuries this idea of sacrifice was somehow shifted from the gift that was brought to the communion that was received. A change like that wrought out in Judaism took place. The priest forstalled the prophet, and ritual absorbed the spirit. The people ceased to offer the fruits of the earth, and began to offer the body and blood of Christ. From that time until the Reformation the prayers of intercession and oblation, formerly offered with the gifts, were repeated with the communion. Thus, unconsciously, a long step backward in the development of Christian truth was taken. The very memorial of Christ, who came to supersede sacrifice, was celebrated as a sacrifice to be perpetually offered by the church. The mass in the Roman Catholic Church is a sacrifice intended to propitiate God and expiate sin. Our Protestant faith holds to a truth more spiritual and higher in development. We assume that God does not need propitiation, but take him at his word, and that word is Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." No-

where do we read that Christ was to reconcile God to the world. His sacrifice was made once for all, that all men might appreciate how intense is the eagerness of God to make men feel his love. The true meaning of the Lord's Supper is not that of a sacrifice which we offer for our sins, but rather the acknowledgment of a great privilege by which we may receive sustenance and power for our life.

It is true that the life and death of Christ represent a great vicarious sacrifice. Did he not come to men to take upon himself their burden and to share their lot? His was not the sin he bore, but ours. The sorrows and the grief that weighed him down he borrowed from our shoulders. The punishment of sin that follows from the love and justice of God's dealings with us fell upon him, not because of what he himself had done, but in spite of that, because of what he had become as the Son of man. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." All great lives and good have a vicarious, saving element. The innocent is evermore involved in the consequence of others' guilt. It is a law of all life, springing from the intimacy with which man is bound to man. The wife suffers for the husband, the children for the parents, the mother for the child. Every one who comes into the world becomes a vicarious burden-bearer for the race. General Washington may or may not have gone behind the shelters that rudely protected his ill-covered soldiers at Valley Forge to pray, but it is very certain that he suffered vicariously for his men and for his country as few have done. Was not Lincoln's weight of woe, that seamed his face with deeper furrows and bent his shoulders and gave new pathos to his eye, a vicarious burden, bearing which

he helped to redeem a nation? And a good man sits in his place in Washington to-day who suffers with the people he represents. Surely nowhere in the Scriptures is expression made too strong of the vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ in his self-sacrifice. The love-principle in his being compelled him to suffer for us. Let us not belittle it by trying to estimate how much of punishment he bore that we deserve. Every man must bear his own burden, and the expiation of our sin remains with us. The penalty of sin, unlike the punishment of crime, is deeply wrought within the sin itself. It is self-acting in its terrible effects, and no man can bear it for you, nor can God himself remove its blight. Adam and Eve can never reenter the lost Eden. But through his great self-sacrifice Jesus Christ shares with us the load, that he may draw us away from further sin, and so from further penalty. A mother suffers for her wayward son. She cannot prevent the searing of his conscience, the hardening of his nature, the shriveling of his finer qualities, but she suffers with him and for him in it all, and by her suffering makes the great appeal of love. Infinitely more, because infinitely closer and with fuller realization of what it means, Christ suffers for our sins, the innocent for the guilty.

Sin must be punished. Somewhere, somehow, righteousness must be maintained. All law must be vindicated, not by vengeance, but by penalty. There is no escape from infinite law. All men are subject to it, all acts lie within the compass of its efficacy. But when men find themselves under sin and subject to the just penalty of the law, the sacrifice of God in Christ becomes the great and ultimate appeal to them to turn away from evil and to seek a better life. Penalty has been suffered by them already, just as fire instantly burns and warns the careless child. But further penalty need not follow unless further sin appears, and Christ in his infinite mercy makes this great

appeal that men may be delivered from their own undoing and be reconciled to God. The real penalties of sin lie in the spirit, those worse than elemental fires that God has kindled and that he alone can quench. God, whose laws have constantly been violated, seeks no vindictive expiation upon man, but in full appreciation of the dignity of his own law, suffers in Christ the penalty of sin that men may feel their own unworthiness and trust the mighty love of God. Thus Jesus turned and looked the pain he felt when Peter had betrayed him, and sent the man forth weeping bitterly. Man naturally appreciates the fact that his sin deserves retribution. It comes upon him in the commitment of his sin. As a part of it, he is conscious of an alienation between him and God by reason of God's broken law. Lest he be held in the thrall of fear, God comes in Christ to set him free. "But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ." Conscience still demands the righting of the injury done to God, to the moral order, to one's self. That satisfaction comes only with the turning of the individual soul from lawlessness to obedience, from selfishness to self-sacrifice, from self to God. Who can hear of the sacrifice of Christ without making it his own? Nowhere in the New Testament is it God who is changed toward us by Christ, but we are everywhere to be reconciled to him. The law is satisfied by the lawgiver's own action, and the call of love rings out over all the world to dissipate the fear of man, and introduce us to the Father. With great currents of love, as the tide draws back to the sea from every river and bay and inlet of the shore, our love must flow unceasingly to the great heart of God.

The sacrifice of Christ is the center of our faith. But it is no *opus operatum*, no dead and formal deed of universal and unconscious efficacy. I offer Christ as my sacrifice, not in elevated host or consecrated bread and wine, but

only as I give my body a living sacrifice to him. The ancient Israelites waited until the sacrifice was slain by the priest, when the blood was sprinkled before the altar to typify new life, pure and undefiled, that should drive out the old within them. Only thus can the Christian offer the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and find himself renewed and sanctified thereby. His life is to cover ours. It is to become our life indeed. The old sins and imperfections are to be sent forth into the wilderness. A German philosopher has said, "It is the essence of religion to sacrifice man to God." "The bloody human sacrifice is, in fact, only a rude, material expression of the inmost secret of religion." Men once gave their children to the flames and their own bodies to be burned. It profited them nothing without love. What they dimly saw, the Christian is called to appreciate in full. The lesson taught to Abraham upon the hills of Palestine is given to us in yet clearer phrase. God will himself provide the sacrifice, and it will be our most precious possession; not our children, nor some ram caught in the thicket, nor rivers of blood nor clouds of incense, nor our money, nor our prayers, but the very sacrifice of Christ, even our own selves.

Albert Wellman Hitchcock.

CHRIST RISEN

MATT. 28: 1-15

"But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep."—1 Cor. 15: 20.

The attitude of men toward the story of the resurrection of Jesus varies according to their estimate of him and their sense of the relative importance of the different elements in the narrative. The devout disciple feeds his love and loyalty by reconstructing in imagination the thrilling scenes of those memorable forty days. He pictures to himself the meeting of the risen Lord with individuals or with little groups. He tries to catch the thrill of those golden moments when the good news passed from lip to lip, "He is risen, he lives again!" The Christian scholar approaches the fourfold record with the scientific instinct, eager to relate the different accounts to one another, to remove, if possible, all discrepancies and to forge another weapon for the arsenal of Christian apologetics. But the average man of the world—and perhaps of the Church—thinks but seldom of the resurrection, except when the Easter joy floods the world and he is compelled to ask himself, "What do all these glad celebrations mean?" Once a year, at least, he dwells long enough upon the matter to have born within him the wish that the wonderful story may be true. "Some time," he says to himself, "I will look into the subject more carefully." Meanwhile he goes on, half believing, half hoping that Christendom is not mistaken.

Underneath all these differing attitudes is the one cru-

cial question, "Have we a risen Lord?" The devout disciple, the Christian scholar, the average man are drawn together at this common point. Antecedent to all the spiritual lessons that may be drawn, more important than the exact harmonizing of all detail and the essential first step in any man's thought on the subject, is the establishment of the truth that Jesus died and rose again. After all, none of us would be satisfied to indulge in pious reveries unless we were sure that the subject which draws our thoughts heavenward has a solid basis in fact. And what are all our efforts at harmonizing worth, even if we can dispose of the apparent inconsistencies in the four accounts, if doubt still lingers touching the possibility and actuality of the event concerning which they give us at best only a fragmentary account?

The one fundamental question is, "What can assure the modern man, made aware of the uniformity of nature and versed in the history of other religions which tell of trances, visions and apparitions, that the story of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth stands unique and impregnable, not to be dislodged by any scientific assault, not to be ever remanded to the realm of myth and legend?"

The safe starting-point for an inquiry like this is the character of Christ. The *man* who has risen, that is the essential point. "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead," shouts Paul in his triumphal pæan.

For thirty years a little stretch of territory bordering on the Mediterranean Sea held within its bounds a most precious possession. No one has ever been able to analyze the personality of Jesus, to declare the secret of his ineffable charm, to measure the quality of his profound influence. When historians and biographers approach this peerless figure they are forced to recognize something in it which eludes and defies the ordinary language wherewith men are

appraised. The deepest thinkers, the keenest judges in and out of Christendom to-day, agree that nineteen hundred years ago a being was in the world at once nobler, gentler, more divine, more human, than all the children of men before or since. Did the short span of thirty years measure the influence of that being or delimit his existence? Could the world lose such a rich possession because Pontius Pilate delivered him to the Jews to be crucified on a certain fatal Friday? Does it not seem rational that such a being would continue to live somewhere in God's universe? Does it not accord with all the laws of consummation of energy? Why, we should believe in the resurrection of Jesus if the records credited to Matthew, Luke and John ended with the narrative of his crucifixion. We should say that it would be impossible for a life like that of Jesus, vital to its finger tips, never balked in the presence of death, communicating vitality at every turn, to be holden by death. The one indestructible thing in this universe is a personality like that of Jesus Christ. He could not be anything less after 30 A.D., than he was before; nay, he must be more, for in that period he was limited to a certain relatively small section of this planet. The time must come when through the gateway of the tomb he should enter into a wider area of life and take on universal relationships.

Such being the presumption, we approach again the familiar stories not only with a will, but with a disposition to believe them. The antecedent probability is now buttressed by the chain of witnesses. One says, "I saw him," another responds, "I saw him too." No matter if their accounts do not exactly agree; the narrative makes no claim to scientific accuracy. The point is clear that a large number of independent witnesses, men and women of emotional or phlegmatic temperament, persons who wanted to believe and persons who fought stoutly against believing, all came at last to the conviction that He whom

they had loved as they walked to and fro in the pleasant places of Galilee and Judæa, He whom they had mourned on that Friday night when gloom possessed their hearts and the face of God was hid, now existed in freer, larger fashion.

Somehow they have gotten their Lord back again after those two days of terrific strain on faith and hope, and now for them it is morning everywhere. They have something to live for. They are so sure about it, so glad because of it, that they must go everywhere telling others the good news. And because they believe it the next generation of Christians believed it, and the next, and the next and on down to our time. The chain of witness-bearing now links the centuries together and reaches round the globe. There has never been an hour since that Sunday morning in Jerusalem when there were not some souls believing in and adoring the risen Jesus. Hearts in the second, the twelfth and the twentieth centuries have burned as ardently as did the hearts of the two disciples who walked to Emmaus. The form of manifestation is inconsequential, but the fact is all-important that through the centuries, sensible, conservative, clear-headed men and women have felt the pressure and the healing touch upon their lives of the risen Jesus. I do not find any devotee of Emerson or Carlyle claiming to have personal fellowship with them to-day. I do not know anywhere in history or literature or contemporaneous life any phenomenon comparable to this undeniable fellowship of human souls with the Lord Christ. One may not be able to explain it, but it is far easier to explain it than to explain it away.

If it be true then that Christ has passed into the ampler life of the heavens, our personal faith in him ought to follow him there. We miss the crowning glory of our religion and lose its most ecstatic thrill when our belief follows him to the tomb in Joseph's garden and halts in-

decisively there. As Browning sings touching human love,

> "Ah, the little more and what bliss it is,
> And the little less and what worlds away."

Admirers of Henry Drummond frequently look back to him for guidance and inspiration. But suppose that a man who loves Drummond thinks only of the Drummond in perfect health, the skilful teacher and earnest evangelist, the brilliant figure in social circles, the Drummond, in short, whom the world knew before that fatal illness seized and prostrated him. But to leave out of one's estimate the three years in which so uncomplainingly he endured the strain of a weary illness, displaying marvelous Christian cheer and fortitude, would be to ignore a most significant section in the total circle of Drummond's life. If Jesus of Nazareth is now, in the midst of the glory of his Father's house, exercising potent influence over the life of the world, you and I ought to avail ourselves of the royal privilege of having converse with such a being. We need not so much increased faith in the fact of the resurrection as we do a deepened fellowship with Him who has risen. A vast deal of work of an apologetic and homiletic character has been done by the scholars, some of it convincing, some of it far from conclusive, but the apologetic which the world cannot gainsay is the disciple who lives in conscious communion, not with a far-away, dreamy, beautiful Galilæan peasant, but with the Son of God, known in the day of his flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, known to-day as King of kings and Lord of lords. Christian faith makes its final, its most logical and most splendid venture when it follows Christ out into the realm of the unknown.

Again, the risen Christ supplies the most powerful impulse to noble living. Everything in the divine economy is

in the interest of conduct. How constantly Paul emphasizes this truth in all that he says about the resurrection! That was not to him simply an event to be demonstrated, but it carries with it a vital impulse. "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above." "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." If fellowship with Christ through the ceaseless ages of eternity be the goal for the disciple, then we must lose no time in establishing in ourselves the qualities and the graces which alone will make heaven worth while. The words "I am the resurrection and the life" must mean that the kind of life which Jesus led stands as the type of life which will insure immortality. It is the only kind of life that according to the laws which govern the survival of the fittest ought to persist. It is the only kind of life which going on century after century, eon after eon, can yield any reward to those who live it. Dr. Gladden has presented this idea impressively in his Easter booklet, "The Practice of Immortality." More and more we are coming to see that the thing to emphasize with regard to the hereafter is not the duration but the nature of the life there; and as one man after another builds himself up in his human years in sweetness and strength of character, so that his very presence breathes peace and help, so the conclusion forces itself upon us that within such a man are the seeds of immortality. There were brought together at New Haven in the autumn of 1902, in connection with the Yale Bicentennial, as distinguished a group of authors, statesmen, scholars, publicists, as have ever been assembled in this country. One who looked upon them and measured somewhat the significance of their life work, came away saying, "This is a most convincing argument for immortality." So the motive presented to us by the thought of the risen Christ, not only begets in us characters akin to his,

but carries to others through those characters a sense of the deathlessness of a Christ-mastered life.

Thus we are led naturally to our final thought that the risen Christ is the supreme fact of Christian testimony. We Christians have a great deal to bear witness to,—the love and grace of God as expressed on the cross of Christ, the peace and joy which comes from following in the steps of the Master. But over and beyond these truths which we are bound to exploit widely, is the truth which started Peter and James and John and the rest of the Twelve on their career of witness-bearing. Something had happened on that Easter morning in Jerusalem that made them extremely happy and eager to be up and about spreading the good tidings. Why should we withhold or minimize the same glorious truth? Dr. Dale of Birmingham recalled thirty years afterward the thrill of delight which was his when at a memorable time in his early ministry he discovered and knew that the Lord Jesus Christ is alive. He says, "I could think of nothing else and preach of nothing else for weeks." This may not be the constant burden of our preaching and our daily testimony, but it should subtly pervade them, as the touch of the springtime is felt upon every opening bud and unfolding leaf. We have something to tell people. We may not expect that those to whom the character of Christ makes no appeal will be greatly influenced by what we have further to say touching the wonder of his risen life. That class of persons is not likely to be convinced by any tablet or monument or relic that has been or will be exhumed. But to the increasing number of persons in the world who look wistfully back to the Galilæan peasant for some solution of life's dark mysteries, we may go with this deeper and more far-reaching message touching what he is, as well as touching what he was. Because he has burst the bonds of death, we can go with a comforting message into the chamber of the sick and dying;

we can share in the last rites paid to our dead, and can ourselves, unafraid, face the last great enemy in the conviction that "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep."

Howard A. Bridgman.

THIRD QUARTER

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED

1 KINGS 12: 12-20

"So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam," etc.

"And so rested Solomon with his fathers;
And of his seed he left behind him Rehoboam,
Even the foolishness of the people, and one that lacked understanding,
Who made the people to revolt by his counsel."

Such is the comment of that moralist and philosophic critic of Israel's history, Jesus, the Son of Sirach, who lived centuries after the events described in our lesson, when both kingdoms had sunk into a memory, and when something like a true perspective could be gained. Another translates this passage, "Ample in foolishness and lacking understanding, Rehoboam let loose the people."

Our lesson to-day is the story of unwisdom, despotism and cruelty on the one hand and of division, secession and the end of the united kingdom on the other. Yet with nearly two thousand years more of historical perspective, we can see even more clearly than in Kings or Ecclesiasticus the truth which the Bible teaches concerning individuals and nations.

It is the Son of Sirach also who says, "All things are double one against another." All life and progress are maintained through the conflict, or, shall we say, rather, harmony of two forces, each of which must have its full measure to produce the divinely desired result. In the

heart, systole and diastole; in man, the animal and the spiritual; in the world, day and night; in humanity, man and woman; in history, local freedom and centralization. Let each have its measure and we have balance, life, beauty and divinely desired results. Let one force overcome the other and war, discord, disease, death, are the issues.

In the confederation of the twelve tribes that God led out of slavery and the desert, there never was perfect union. Local jealousies, selfishness and lack of genuine religion prevented the Hebrew clans from becoming an ideal nation. The people clamored for a king. Logically, then, they should have sacrificed local desires and wishes on the altar of pure patriotism. God, speaking by his prophets, did not encourage monarchy, knowing it to be premature, even counting it wickedness in the people to ask for a king. Nevertheless he allowed the same in his wrath. The people having accepted this grant, were bound "to form a perfect union," to lay all tribal jealousies and personal selfishness on the burning altar of religion also.

Nevertheless, despite theory and logic, there was under Saul bitter jealousy between Ephraim and Judah. No sooner was the first king dead than, without consulting their brethren, the men of Judah came and anointed David as king over the house of Judah. The other tribes still held allegiance to Saul's descendants and for seven years there was bitter alienation, reconciliation being effected only after manifold disasters. In order to secure his own personal safety and to break up, as far as possible, tribal jealousies, David formed his body-guard not of Israelites but of foreigners (Cherithites, Pelethites and other Gibborim or mighty men), who were veterans under Solomon, and whose praises are sung in the Song of Songs and in the historical books. The revolt of Absalom was but one of the symptoms of ill-concealed rivalry

between Ephraim and Judah. Solomon's despotism and cruelty in overtaxing the people, to keep up his extravagant architectural enterprises in Jerusalem and to support the abominable paganism which he fostered in the capital, served but to increase the divisive sectionalism which issued in secession. We can see in the books of the Kings how the Jewish court steadily degenerated and how little the northern tribes cared to keep up the material splendor and a centralized system in the south, associated as it was with so much oppression and cruelty.

Yet Solomon had high hopes of his son born—so it seems to our view—among the herd of his princesses, from an Ammonite mother. He named him "enlarger of the people," or Rehoboam, and until God warned him to the contrary, expected that his son would bear the glory of the united kingdom to distant ages. But the proverb of Japan, "the great man has no son," was as true in the case of Solomon as with Charlemagne and Cromwell. Around Rehoboam were indeed the old and wise counsellors of his father. They knew the nation's needs, the political dangers and the rising agitation between the prophetical and ecclesiastical elements. The priests, as is usual with their class, wished to increase their prestige and revenues, centralizing all worship in the temple at Jerusalem. The prophets, on the other hand, who had an eye single to the purity of worship, desired to decentralize religion and make it more spiritual. By emphasizing the idea of local rights, they would preserve ancient freedom. The old men knew that Jeroboam was but waiting in Egypt to take advantage of a change in the dynasty. With as little scruple of conscience as either Solomon or Rehoboam had, this political refugee, Jeroboam, was ready to mix politics and religion in such a way as to carry out his personal ambitions. As Solomon had built shrines to their gods in Jerusalem, for his foreign and pagan wives, so Jeroboam

was only too ready to set up at the northern end of the kingdom calf-images, of which he was to say, "Behold thy gods, O Israel."

It was not that Rehoboam was wholly weak or bad. He did accept the counsel of the sages in so far as to appoint Shechem, the ancient holy site of worship and freedom as the place of his coronation. Surrounded, however, for the most part by the gilded youth who had been brought up in luxury and knew not the toils and hardships of David and his companions and remote from the people, both king and courtiers had little sympathy with popular needs and burdens.

Living under the shadow of a great name is in itself perilous. Unless descendants show personal vigor and follow the example of the fathers that worked their way up, calamity is sure to descend. The old men's counsel was Jesus-like. In their view, the sovereign should be the greatest servant, and he that would be chief as he that served. In such a case, the nation would be a unit, the people happy and prosperity continual. On the contrary, the young men, having grown up in idleness, and presuming upon mere ancestral renown, urged further measures of heartless despotism and cruelty. So when the people, fiercely proud of their ancient liberties, and the king, determined on further centralization and extravagance, met at Shechem, the war at once broke out, the threat of whips and scorpions was answered by a shout of defiance. Jesse's son and the temple and the extravagant court were left behind, and the northern people and their leaders formed a new kingdom. Fatuous insolence in a prince led to his deposition and abjuration.

Here was the great precedent borne down the ages by the written Word of God, that gave William of Orange and the Dutch Republic, the English commonwealth and kingdom, and the American colonies, each in their time,

their right to depose their prince, when he ceased to be the people's servant and the upholder of law and righteousness. For all ages this Scripture has served as a warning to monarchs. National hatred of cruelty and despotism usually takes violent form against their incarnation in agents who are especially cruel taskmasters. Adoram, stoned by the Israelites, is but a type of many a man who in a revolution has forfeited his life to popular vengeance.

How shall we look at this great disruption of the tribes of Israel? how appraise morally the value of this event in its relations to Christianity and to the ethical development of the race? how judge impartially even a character like Jeroboam? how measure justice to king and people?

We know how the Jewish patriot, the man of the southern kingdom and the priestly chronicler felt. To the man of Judah it seemed as though his country's life was maimed, that the evil of separation was an unmixed one, that Rehoboam's insolence on the one hand and the sectional jealousy of the northerners on the other, were the immediate and preeminent causes of the revolt. For ages afterward, on the pages of prophet, historian and apochryphal writer, we hear the wail, we see the tears, we read the curses invoked on "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

I. *Nevertheless "it was a thing brought about of Jehovah."*

So said the prophetic historian who wrote the book of Kings. So we see and believe now. The division of north and south was of the Lord. To us, with the longer perspective of history, and judging life and the world as Jesus taught us, not by outward splendor, or the law of material prosperity, but by the cross of Calvary, this mighty event, so far-reaching in its influence, seems mercifully ordained of God, "that he might establish his work."

If Israel's mission, under God, were the accumulation of wealth, or the increase of Oriental splendor, then it were

well that Solomon's kingdom should have endured. If the whole meaning of the "covenants" with Abraham, Moses and David, the call, the captivity, the liberation from Egypt and entrance into the promised land meant only that Israel should have a monarchy, a brilliant capital, and continuous material prosperity, then the history of the Hebrews would have been in the common Asiatic category of monotonous luxury to the few and ignorance to the many. There would have been simply more Hebrew sultans and harems and a Jerusalem that was only as Thebes or Bagdad. That is all. But to-day, on new continents in ever-opening centuries, we have "the Jerusalem . . . which is our mother." Instead of the Arabian Nights we possess the Old Testament; in place of Mahomet, Jesus. Love, not fate; the New Testament, rather than the Koran, rules the world.

God who sees the end from the beginning had already spoken to Solomon through Ahijah, who by word and symbol informed Jeroboam that ten of the tribes should be his. Despite Solomon's attempt to kill his rival, God's word came true. We who to-day use the search-light of Jesus, Paul's powerful telescope and the great refracting mirror of the writer to the Hebrews can discern the matter with clearness. The real reason for the existence of the nation led out of slavery in Egypt and divinely educated, was to act as custodian of God's oracles, and to be the source, according to the flesh, of the Saviour of the whole world. But how either the Scriptures or our Saviour could have come to us through a continuance of the merely Oriental splendor and the mixed Jehovahism and paganism, such as ran riot in Solomon's time, built as it was on oppression, is hard to see. Indeed, God's Word teaches that neither the Christ, nor the gospel of the cross, could have sprung from the environment which Rehoboam wished to perpetuate.

Studying by the Holy Spirit's aid this lesson, whatever be his name or blood, every man who loves our race and its salvation, will to-day take his place in spirit, not at the Jews' wailing place in Jerusalem, to pray for the return of Solomon's glory, but rather on Calvary; there, at the center of the world's history, to be thankful for the disruption of the Hebrew tribes and to justify the ways of God to man.

II. *The devout American patriot, as he reads this lesson, finds food for thought and ground for rejoicing.*

He thanks God for the wisdom of his fathers, who declared these United States of America to be forever free and independent. So long as monarchy fulfils the hopes of ancient freedom, so long as federation accomplishes more for the general good than the segregated tribes, so long will king and kingdom be justified and remain beautiful in the sight of God and man. But when monarchy increases its power at the expense of the people's rights and of local freedom, making a one-sided development, not in the line of intertwining itself more closely with the national consciousness, but, as in the case of Rehoboam and his father, in the line of unessential tokens of power, such as personal luxury, the delights of spectacular show, the unauthorized increase of prerogative, and the curtailment of the people's rights and comforts, then not only is the freedom of the people destroyed, but the honor of God is compromised. Our fathers, learning it from the Bible, believed that there should be a constant interchange of views between the king and his most intelligent subjects, or, in other words, taxation always associated with just representation. This being denied them, the men of '76 felt justified in revolution. In carrying out, with toil and sacrifice, their purposes, they stood in line with the prophets, with the deputies of Israel, and with all who throughout the ages have held to the idea of "the greatest

good to the greatest number." It was because of the wicked abuse of one-man power by Solomon and Rehoboam, that in the divine order of evolution, the threefold differentiation of government was "brought about of Jehovah," so that Isaiah could, centuries later, map out all true government thus: "For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; he will save us."

III. *The final and personal lesson must be pointed with thanksgiving to God for the glorious Old Testament, which teaches not only in precepts but so richly by concrete examples.*

In Kings, we have the historic picture. The king, afflicted with inordinate self-esteem and an unreasonable estimate of his own superiority, manifesting itself in lofty airs and contempt of the toiling taxpayer, refused to take the hint given him by the wise men. He delivered his insolent ultimatum. The result is he had at once to drive hard in his chariot in order to reach Jerusalem with his life.

In Proverbs this historic incident becomes a crystal of wisdom, that scintillates for all time. We see Pride stalking ahead, thinking himself lord and master, when he is nothing but the blind forerunner and hireling of Destruction. The haughty spirit, not yet fallen, but sliding with an impetus that will soon be uncontrollable, will soon go over the precipice.

There is a pride in things outside of self, which, being unselfish, may bear fruit in noble acts and scorn of meanness, but the pride which means exaggerated opinion of ourselves is of the devil. How often, in how many ways, in what numberless disguises, does pride steal imperceptibly into the heart! We rightly associate this easily degraded passion with the devil, whose "darling sin is pride which apes humility." Pride rules the weak head with the strongest bias. It is the never failing vice of fools and "in general, pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes."

Laus Deo! Over against the dark record of Rehoboam stands in eternal winsomeness the figure of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, who gives strength for the burden and rest to the soul.

William Elliot Griffis.

JEROBOAM'S IDOLATRY

1 KINGS 12:25-33

"Guard yourselves from idols."—1 John 5: 21.

The story of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," is one of the suggestive and tangled histories of the book of the Kings. It is the story of a man who kept one commandment by breaking another—a story of splendid but mistaken opportunities, and also of the long and terrible entail of evil-doing. Like the tolling of the bell in the village, which strikes the years of the dead as they are borne to their burial, so tolls this refrain of the scribe, from chapter to chapter, until twenty-three times it is repeated in the Chronicles of the Northern Kingdom: "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." It is like the name of Judas with the perpetual phrase, "who betrayed him." With the death of Solomon, whose brilliant reign is the glory of Hebrew history, there came a crisis in the political affairs of the tribes. For while Solomon is reputed as the wise king, his wisdom was a sort of shrewd prudence and worldly policy, which expressed itself in great material prosperities, an extended commerce, a spectacular court, splendid architecture and a centralized worship at Jerusalem, but along with these things there were shadows of a growing tyranny, of increased exactions in tribute and labors and of widespread and deep moral degenerations, smothered for the time, but like fires ready to burst forth in blazing revolt, when the door should be opened. Perhaps, as Dean Farrar suggests, the warning of

Deut. 17: 14-20 was unwritten at this time. At any rate the king does the very things which are expressly forbidden to his descendants; and here is the worm which gnawed and at length broke, according to Arab tradition, the king's staff, upon which he leaned.

Two evils are yoked together in bringing about this moral decay, viz: polygamy and polytheism. The one was introduced by his father David, but carried by his son to terrible excesses, in those multiplied alliances with Edom and Moab, with Phœnicia and Egypt and the Canaanitish tribes, until it is said he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines in the royal seraglio, and the family life of the court was hopelessly corrupt. The other logically follows the first and comes in via the alien and heathen faiths of the king's harem, in the temples to Astarte and Chemosh and Molock which cover the inner slopes of Olivet and infect the religious life of the city and nation; while the foreign habits of life, the vast expenditures upon his palaces, his standing army and the enforced labors of the common people conspired to deepen the popular resentment. And when according to royal command the people are summoned to the coronation of his only son Rehoboam, a release of burdens is unexpectedly demanded by the northern tribes as a condition of allegiance to the new king.

As King John at Runnymede, Rehoboam asks time to consider this sudden protest of the tribes and three days are granted. But they are not "days of grace," for, turning away from the conciliatory and generous counsels of the older men who had been gathered about his father, he seeks the advice of the silly and idle youths who had been brought up with him in the leisure and vices of the court. In their foolishness and pride they counsel that the burdens be made heavier and that his answer should be a threat to make his little finger thicker than the loins of his

father Solomon. It was a fatuous and fatal answer, for it brought the swift and ominous cry, "To your tents, O Israel!" and a kingdom is rent in twain never again to be united.

In anticipation of this revolt of the ten tribes from the sovereignty of Judah and Jerusalem, an old prophet had pointed to Jeroboam, an adventurous but lowly son of the hill country of Ephraim as the coming king of the new kingdom. This young man had made his way, it seems, from the position of a common laborer to that of an overseer of his tribe in the great constructive enterprises of the king in the building of Jerusalem. Of pleasing address and great administrative ability, and withal of generous habits in the use of money, like Absalom, he uses these popular gifts to make friends until at last his own ambitions and the prophecy of Ahijah are no longer kept secret and he flees an exile to the Egyptian court to await the death of the Jewish king. With the revolt of the northern tribes he is called to the throne of the kingdom of Israel, so named in distinction to the kingdom of Judah, now reduced to a single tribe and the ancestral capital of the house of David.

It was an exalted but perilous position for an untried man. And yet we cannot withhold our admiration of the ableness with which he meets the great demands of this initial hour in Israel.

Realizing the hypnotizing power which the national worship and festivals of Jerusalem would exercise upon the mind and heart in restoring the tribes to the sovereignty of the house of David, Jeroboam resolves upon two radical measures. First, he establishes national sanctuaries at the ancient shrines of Dan on the north and at Bethel on the south, and in each he sets up the golden image of a bull with imposing rites of dedication, in order to wean the hearts of Israel from the altars of Jerusalem. And second,

he proceeds to ordain his own priests from the ranks of the common people—doubtless a measure of necessity,—as in the rending of the kingdom the Levites had flocked to the temple of Judah. Later on he institutes the great yearly festivals with unusual splendor and so satisfies the social hunger of the tribes. Thus by a single *coup d'etat* he breaks the continuity of the national worship and introduces, perhaps unwillingly, the idolatry of Egypt.

As we read the abbreviated record of these acts of the new king and recognize the political ability with which he initiates the new kingdom, we are impressed by a double consciousness—that of the splendid chance which Jehovah puts in the way of this man to relieve the spiritual and civic fortunes of Israel and also that of the tremendous difficulty of measuring a man's sin.

And first, *the splendid chance* which comes to Jeroboam! With the secrets of history open to our eyes our sympathies naturally go forth to the tribe of Judah; but standing on the rock ridges of Bethel, in the year 940 B.C., with the narrowed and sterile boundaries of Jerusalem behind you, like a lion bereft of her cubs, while to the north stretches the hills and valleys of Samaria and Galilee, even to the foot hills of the Lebanon, it would have been easy to have given the empire of the future to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. For it not only possessed the vaster territory and the more fertile soil of Canaan, but here were located the early sanctuaries of the Hebrew race and the great scenes of their history. Here Abram had builded his altars and Jacob had kept his flocks, and here transpired the notable events of the later conquest. The birthplaces of Deborah and Joshua and Gideon and Samuel were in the hill country, and all the heroic memories of their great lives. And here already the kindling literature of the psalms was beginning to reveal the possibilities in heart and mind of the upper tribes as later this moral stamina was shown in the

development of the prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah.

It is a wide door which opens to this man of Ephraim, both from the inheritances of the past and in the great possible assets of the future, but he does not enter it. Instead, one notes the political demoralization which follows this experiment of successful revolution, not only in the break from the original kingdom of Judah but in the adventurous and fickle repetition of this revolt among themselves, until nine changes of dynasty are counted in the two hundred and forty-five years of its national existence, while the germs of a lowered religious life are evident in the growingly corrupt social and moral practices of the people even in the days of "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat." But these seeds of evil propagate themselves from generation to generation with terrible momentum, until at the last the shrill, stern voices of the prophets are unable to arouse the court or the people to the impending judgments of God and the kingdom is swept into the captivity of Assyria, never more to return. And the ten tribes become literally "the *lost* tribes of Israel"—lost to civilization and history, utterly swallowed up and assimilated in the grinding stomach of the Assyrian empire, while the man who is held responsible for the sowing and the reaping of this harvest of doom is "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

A century later, Judah, scourged by the same messenger of judgment and for the same sins, is also carried away into the captivity of Babylon, but her captivity is a savor of life, for she comes back a regenerated remnant, to make real and abiding to the world the great Hebrew message of one God, spiritual and holy, whose one great wish for all men is that they may be like him.

We turn now to the question which is the crux of this history:

The sin of Jeroboam, what was it?

It is easy and yet not easy to define it. We have a vague sense of unfairness and overloading in this perpetual pillory of Jeroboam. Other infidelities were yoked with his, and other kings wrought mischief in Israel, as the blotted chronicle of the northern kingdom plainly reveals, but in the reiterated judgment of the prophet, we have the initial and propagating cause of the deepening decline in character and life which for over two hundred years distilled its poison of idolatry among the tribes of the hill country, until fostered and fed from many sources, it ended in a sea of death, and it was "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" when he put the worship of a gilded calf in the place of the invisible God.

Here is the great hinge of his offending and the cradle of this viperous brood of personal and public sins. It was not that Jeroboam was a usurper, for this revolt of Israel from Judah was tested as we test the right of all revolutions by their success. A king was needed in those days of apostasy and chaos and the choice fell upon this natural leader of men and was sanctioned by the call of the prophet of the Most High.

Nor was it the purpose of the new king to fasten idolatry upon the worship of the people, but rather to make more plain and popular the altars of Jehovah and so to foil the influence of Jerusalem and clip the wings of his royal rival, the king of Judah. It was a governmental expedient whereby he might hold the tribes to their new vows of allegiance to the sanctuaries and the court of the northern kingdom.

This then was the sin of Jeroboam, the sin of putting a policy of lowered religious demand upon a people already educated in part to higher ideals of worship and faith. As Dean Stanley says, Jeroboam breaks the second commandment in order to keep the first one, and so turns

the currents of thought and the standards of living from the ethical to the expedient and the physical. This was the sin of Aaron in the camp at Sinai and the swift wrath of Moses then has been the temper of all God's prophets ever since, because in this thing was the difference between the invisible Jehovah of the Hebrew and the graven idols of the heathen. Therefore to lose this difference was to lose the great message of religion in the world.

And while, as Carlyle says, "an idol is Eidolon, a thing seen, a symbol," and symbols enter into all worship more or less, from the fetish of a twisted tree and a black stone to the great liturgies and creeds of Christendom, yet they become evil when they take the place of Him for whom they are set up and insincerity and doubt have eaten out the heart and honesty of worship. For when "you do not believe but only believe that you believe," the forms and formulas of faith are shams and idols.

And the sin of Jeroboam was just here: he lowered the temperature of religion, using material ceremonies for spiritual realities and false means for good ends until the seeds of moral death are planted in the ideals of the people. This is the peril of all times, that a form or a formula, a book or a church, shall be put in the place of a living communion with Him who is the great reality of all religion and who wills that every follower of his should do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. These are the great realities of personal religion, and although they are not easy to do and cost much in time and thought and strength, yet they carry the pledge of all social redemption and spiritual life. Over against this sin of Jeroboam then we put the counsel of the apostle: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" as the great working law of the divine life in the hearts of men.

William H. Davis.

ASA'S GOOD REIGN

2 Chron. 14: 1-12

"Help us, O Lord our God; for we rely on thee."—2 Chron. 14: 11.

The history of Israel after the death of Solomon and the division of the kingdom is one of shame and degradation. The kingdom which had attained such strength, power and glory under David and Solomon, was rent in twain by internal dissensions after the death of the latter; and the two kingdoms rivaled each other more in the depth of their wickedness and in their extreme departure from God than in most other particulars. Seldom has there been in history such a rapid decadence of national spirit and religious life. While this was more apparent in the kingdom of Israel than in that of Judah, yet it was manifest in both. Upon the death of Abijah, Asa succeeded to the kingdom. He was very young at his accession and for some time the affairs of the government were administered by his mother, or, according to some, his grandmother Maachah, who is understood to have been a granddaughter of Absalom. Sometimes it occurs that characters appear in families and epochs that cannot be accounted for upon any of the ordinary principles of evolution. They seem to be an exception to the laws of heredity as we generally recognize them or we fail to discover their marked characteristics in their near ancestors. There seems to have been nothing in precedent conditions or direct inheritance that prophesied the good reign of Asa.

The young king seems to have possessed from his early years those rare combinations of excellences that we call character, however he obtained them. On assuming the reins of government, he was conspicuous for his earnestness in supporting the worship of God and rooting out idolatry with its attendant immoralities, and for the vigor and wisdom with which he provided for the prosperity of his kingdom. In his zeal against heathenism he did not spare his grandmother Maachah, who occupied the special dignity of "king's mother," to which great importance was attached in the Jewish court, as afterwards in Persia. She had set up some impure worship in a grove, but Asa burnt the symbol of her religion and threw its ashes in the brook Kidron, as Moses had done to the golden calf, and then deposed Maachah from her dignity. Such radical and decisive action upon the part of a young man, in the beginning of his reign, indicates unusual courage and strong principles of action. He evidently had that quality of character, so much vaunted in these modern days, that we call *strenuousness*. What he believed to be right, he did, apparently without regard to consequences or family affiliations.

Asa exhibited early the characteristics of real statesmanship. He recognized that right religious conditions are the true basis of a nation's prosperity; and he was especially zealous to restore to Judah that consciousness of the high destiny to which God had called her, and the belief that the divine power was truly at work within her.

The first ten years of his reign were occupied with the reformation of worship and the strengthening of defenced cities. The tribe of Judah seems always to have had and exhibited the better traits of the Jewish people; associated with Benjamin she now made up the small kingdom that was Asa's inheritance, and over which he had

such a long and brilliant reign. His early and earnest efforts towards religious reformation, his strenuous purpose, at any cost, to root out all idolatrous practices; his firm and restful faith in God, together with his statesman-like husbanding and strengthening of the resources of his kingdom, seem to have restored the old morale to his people and given them again that *esprit de corps* for which these tribes were especially noted in the glorious days of David and Solomon.

There is no doubt that Asa's personal example and wise measures tended much to consolidate the strength of his little kingdom, and to raise it to that equality with the rival kingdom, which might not in the first instance have appeared feasible when the great disproportion of territory is considered. He was thus unconsciously preparing himself and his people for that great crisis in their history, the invasion from Egypt under Zerah and his almost numberless host. We do not read of so large an army elsewhere in Scriptural history as this one, that, with flaunting banners, came sweeping through the mountain defiles to the seemingly certain overthrow and destruction of this little kingdom. Asa had done all that man could do, with the resources at his command, to repel this expected invasion, and now, with his comparatively little host he marches to meet his almost countless enemy with a courage and fortitude that seem almost preposterous and foolhardy if we leave out of account that alliance upon which he chiefly depended,—the presence and power of Jehovah, who had so often in the past history of their nation miraculously interposed to deliver them from their foes. Before going into this unequal battle, King Asa offered a brief prayer to God, which, in its way, is as wonderful as can be found in this kind of literature in any age.

Perhaps nothing gives us a truer, all-around estimate

of a man than his prayers. They reveal him as he is, stripped for the moment of all artificial disguises. In his prayers he stands revealed, both as to character and range of thought; and this seems no less true when the prayer is feigned and insincere. The Pharisee revealed himself as absolutely in his hypocritical prayer as did the publican in the single petition that expressed the yearning of his soul. This prayer of Asa's indicates, not only that he was a deeply religious man who had learned the great secret of "the rest of faith," but also that he had great breadth of comprehension. The true philosophy of prayer underlies these brief but pregnant petitions. It was not a mere outburst of emotion in the presence of impending fear and trouble, but a calm reliance upon a source of divine strength that had been tested, and upon promises that had never been discounted or broken.

This wonderful prayer, for such indeed it may be properly called, is in every way worthy of careful study, and it will bear the closest analysis. It supremely magnifies God's power and exemplifies his willingness to use his power for those who, doing their utmost, still wholly rest on him. The result of the prayer, the marvelous victory achieved against such overwhelming odds, pledges God's help and a successful issue in every earnest conflict with spiritual foes, where the faith is implicit and is based upon his unchanging promises. There is a sublime, unwavering confidence in Asa's expression, "We rely on thee." This supreme trust belongs to the life of faith. It is the result of experience. It cannot be simulated. It belongs to the higher ranges of the spiritual life, where the soul walks with God in a divine friendship, like Abraham of old. To such he reveals himself. They rest in him without a shadow of doubt, without a suspicion of fear, reposing in "the green pastures and beside the still waters" of perfect assurance and unalloyed and unabating trust.

Such men and women in all ages of the Church from the days of Abraham until now, have had power with God in prayer and prevailed. The conquest of faith over the hosts of evil and unrighteousness have been gained by these champions. Luther and Knox and Wesley, and in later times Finney and Moody, have been men of this stamp and leaders of marvelous power. Men often tell us that "God is always on the side of the heaviest battalions"; but human history again and again has proven the fallaciousness and falsity of the proverb. There is a factor to be reckoned with that many leave out of the problem altogether. It is the force that Matthew Arnold says "makes for righteousness." When a man or men ally themselves with it they are invincible and ultimately victorious. The philosophy of history cannot be understood without taking into the account these unseen forces that are allied with righteousness. The equations of human life, whether in the narrow range of individual experiences or in the wider circle of national development, cannot be worked out successfully if we eliminate or leave out the divine factor. We shall do well to recall often this wonderful experience of Asa's. The history of the world and the Church has many a counterpart of it. We shall strengthen our own faith as we meditate upon this trustful prayer and its decisive answer. May we not catch an inspiration from it that shall make our victories over spiritual foes more complete and constant?

"Where is that Spirit, Lord, which dwelt
In Abra'm's breast, and sealed him thine?
Which made Paul's heart with sorrow melt,
And glow with energy divine?

"Is not thy grace as mighty now
As when Elijah felt its power;
When glory beamed from Moses' brow,
Or Job endured the trying hour?"

Elijah Horr.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S REFORM

2 CHRON. 19: 1-11

"Deal courageously, and the Lord be with the good."—2: 11.

In this general period in the history of the southern kingdom, of which the present lesson treats, three men rise above the common level of Judah's kings and people. They catch the eye as do mountain peaks.

The first is good King Asa, third in the line of Judah's kings and first of her reformers,—the leader in the first national protest against that worldly policy inherited from the reign of his great-grandfather, Solomon. Under Asa, whose special work was to lead the reaction against the corrupting influences of various foreign religions, there was a return to the religious principles which made memorable the reign of his great ancestor, David.

The third is Joash, the only descendant of David to escape the bloody hand of Athaliah, the story of whose rescue by faithful priests and education in the temple and elevation to the throne is one of the romances of history, and whose reforms are among the notable ones in the history of the southern kingdom. Between Asa and Joash stands Jehoshaphat, son of the former and great-grandfather of the latter, of whose personal history we know little, since the Scriptures were written not to exploit their heroes but to reveal God, but of whose character we know much, since the fundamental thing in a man always speaks.

His is the story of splendid struggle against the inter-

nal corruption of the nation through the idolatry of the people. Ascending the throne in the flower of his young manhood, the new king quickly proved himself the worthy successor of a worthy father. With characteristic vigor, he took up and carried on the work Asa had laid down.

First, he signalized his opening administration by taking prompt and unusual measures for the defence of his kingdom. By an extensive and thorough reconstruction of the military defences of the more strategic and important cities, he placed Judah in a new attitude among the surrounding tribes. Then followed moral measures of defence, new in Judah's history. Jehoshaphat apparently felt the need of supplying[1] "some permanent counterpoise to the influences which had so deeply degraded his kingdom." "For the first time, we distinctly hear of regular judicial and educational functions in the Jewish Church, founded on the 'Book of the Law.' Words spoken, sung, shouted, with inspired force, we have heard before. This is the first recorded example, since the Decalogue, of such injunctions being committed to writing." As the result of this teaching tour of the princes among the people through all the cities of Judah, there broke out not only a new religious life in the kingdom itself, but the fear of the Lord, it is said, fell upon all the surrounding peoples. Business revived with the revival of morals and a new prosperity dawned upon the whole southern kingdom. But in the height of this revival the king repeated the mistake of Asa. He entered into an alliance with the forceful, unscrupulous Ahab, and cemented it by marriage between their children. It is the story, old as man and new as each new-born child, of the awful fascination of worldliness. Success is quite as dangerous, in another way, as failure. Jehoshaphat learned in the danger and blood of strife the mistake he had committed.

[1] Stanley: History of the Jewish Church. Vol. 2. p. 337.

His relapse into worldliness was followed by renewed zeal in the service of God. The scene of battle is followed by a beautiful picture of peace; the passing ambition to build a kingdom great in temporal magnificence by the ambition to build a kingdom great in morality and justice. The nineteenth chapter tells the story of these measures of reform which signalized the closing epoch of Jehoshaphat's reign, and which are typical of the best and wisest in the reform methods of all times and places.

I. *It was a religious reformation.*

The basis of the reform was in the morals of the people. The appeal of the good priest, Jehu, which recalled the king to his senses and to his duty (19:2, 3) was distinctly an appeal to his faith in God and to his duty as the representative of God before the people. Nor was the response of the king less distinctly religious. His first move was to bring the people back to the God of their fathers (19:4). There were many abuses crying for correction; but he was wise enough, because he was good enough, to see that, until the hearts of the people were fixed in their duty to God, until they had been gripped anew by the consciousness of their divine mission among the nations of the earth, the reformation of specific sins and abuses would be like lopping off fruitless and dead branches and leaving the worm still gnawing at the roots of the tree. The king recalled the people to just views of the place of God as the King and Lawgiver of the nation. He aroused in them the sense of their personal responsibility as his subjects. He fired them by his own renewed zeal to fresh devotion.

This is the profound lesson, so easily missed, so hard to learn, but so vital to all enduring reform, which is needed for our own time. Of reformers energetic and brave, there is little lack in our land and century. Of results, vindicating the inherent sense of righteousness among

the people and the possible conquest of gigantic evils by organized and aroused good, there are many and inspiring. But the sadness and discouragement of it all is that things do not stay measurably reformed, and so little of permanent result is gained. Largely, this is due to the failure to perceive what the king and his faithful priest saw,—that the basis of all far-reaching and lasting reform must lie under all other foundations on a distinct renewal of faith in God, in consecration to him, and in an aroused sense of personal responsibility. For all great questions are, essentially, questions of morals and of religion.

The final difficulty with much of our present day reform movement is that it does not frankly recognize this and also the fact that the main trouble with society is a moral one.[1] "The chief difficulty with modern social life is not a mechanical difficulty but a moral fault." Because this is true, any method of reform which does not aim, first and finally, at the moral and religious education of the people is a method which lays out its resources on the scaffolding instead of on the structure. As soon as the hands are off, the stone rolls back to the foot of the hill. We need a new sense of personal responsibility. All external rearrangements of society are but temporary devices. Internal quickening of the individual is the only hope of permanent change. Reforms must come from within rather than from without.[2] "It is quite true that one legitimate prayer of the Christian reformer in the present age may be, 'Create a better social order, O God, and renew a right relation between various classes of men'; but a much deeper and worthier petition of one who desires to shape the social order of the time would be, as it was of old, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God;

[1] Peabody: Jesus Christ and the Social Question, p. 118.
[2] *Ibid.*

and renew a right spirit within me.'" The same truth is given, in parable, by a more recent writer, thus:[1] "A number of years ago, I brought down from the mountains three little pine-trees and set them out in an unfavorable spot about a yard apart. Two of them lingered along for a year or two and finally died; but one held its own and, now transplanted to a better place, is flourishing finely. It survived and came at last to its own, not by virtue of its environment, but by virtue of its own intrinsic force and indomitableness. It had 'root in itself.'"

Such is the first great lesson of Jehoshaphat's reforms. He began with the roots of things. He started with God and the soul of man. His contribution to the history of reform is not one of method but of principle. His point of view, the end he sought, are the significant lessons for us of to-day to read in his work. Methods, indeed, may be the wings of purpose; but methods are of little moment unless they are the means by which the inspired purpose moves on toward the goal, God in the soul of man. With the quickening of the sense of personal responsibility to God as the supreme Lawgiver, is created a new character, and character, alone, is the guaranty of permanent improvement in details of conduct, either in the individual or the collection of individuals which we call the community. Emerson wisely calls the reformer, "The restorer of truth and good." This means that he is a re-maker, more than a destroyer. He re-forms or re-creates. Each age needs men who will tear down abuses; but our age needs more, men who will tear down by building up, who will drive out evil by bringing in good. Certainly, there has been no period in the history of our land when, more truly than now, men have repeated the closing words of Lowell's Commemoration Ode of 1865,

[1] James B. Gregg: Sermons, p. 41.

"O Beautiful! my Country!
. . . . . .
What were our lives without thee?
What all our lives to save thee?
We reck not what we gave thee;
We will not dare to doubt thee,
But ask whatever else, and we will dare."

But with his ardor of patriotism which is our pride as a nation, our hope is that, like our fathers of whom Lowell says,

"They founded deep and well,
Those danger-chosen chiefs of men
Who still believed in heaven and hell,"

we may recognize the eternal truths, God and man's need of him and responsibility to him, as the point of view and the inspiring principle of all reform; and that the only reform worth talking about is that which aims to reform private and public character on the lines of the divine image. "Back to the ideals of our fathers" is the needed battle-cry of the hour.

II. *A judicial reform.*

With his deep and controlling sense of the moral need of the nation, it seems only a logical step in his work of reformation when we read (19:5-7) that Jehoshaphat re-established the judiciary of the country and gave it a charge which was impressive in its reminder of the moral obligations of the judges to the people. He told them, plainly, that they judged not for men but for Jehovah, and as an incentive to the faithful discharge of their high moral obligations, reminded them of the divine Presence with them in all matters of judgment. The address to the judges of Israel in the Eighty-second Psalm is an echo of Jehoshaphat's words to those of his kingdom:

"God standeth in the congregation of God;
He judgeth among the gods.

How long will ye judge unjustly,
And respect the persons of the wicked?
Judge the poor and fatherless:
Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.
Rescue the poor and needy:
Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked."

In his charge, the divine character ascribed in the Old Testament to judges, as, in a sense, even higher than kings, prophets or priests, this representative in the relations of man to man, and the interpreter of his judgments, is most evident. The union of judge and priest in Eli does not more plainly show the sanctity of the office of judge than these words of Judah's king. In them he asserts the divine right of the judges to pronounce judgment, and this is done not simply to remind them of their authority but, far more, to arouse them to their duty. It is easy to see the estimate which the king placed upon the enforcement of law and upon the quality of the men set to enforce it. As Matthew Henry reminds us, the motives he wished them to consider are three, "all taken from God." (1) They had their commission from God. (2) His eye was upon them. (3) He is the great example of justice to all magistrates. Such is the high ideal of the place among men of him who is appointed to interpret and administer the laws of the land. The seal of his appointment to office is not from one political party or another but from God. He is in a most positive sense the representative of divine justice. It is his duty to know the law, to interpret and apply it without fear or favor. He is to be neither bought nor sold. Of all men in the community, he must be above sordid and personal motives. He discharges the duties of his office under the eye of God and by him will be held accountable for the spirit and manner in which he performs them. In the law and character of God is his example in the adminis-

tration of his office. As God would be just, so must he seek to be just. As God would deal kindly, so must he be kind. As God would seek the ends of truth and righteousness, so must he. It is a high ideal, but it is the only one which has ever given any land or age a pure judiciary, in which people have had confidence in times of peril to great national ideals, and which has educated them to higher views of office-bearing and of law. As it has been written of Charles Kingsley so should it be of the judges of the people:

> "A Righteous Man
> Who loved God and Truth above all things
> A Man of untarnished honour—
> . . . . . .
> Pitiful to the weak—Yearning after the erring.
> Stern to all forms of wrong and oppression
> Yet most stern toward himself."

III. *God is with the man of courage.*

It takes courage of the highest quality to lead or to follow in any reform which is serious and conscientious. To engage in it means losses in a thousand ways, as men measure loss. From the time when Paul "lost all things" for Christ to now, when some city attorney or citizen or preacher loses popularity or business, or personal comfort in promoting it, the price of all true reform has been high. No reformer ever was or ever can be a coward. Before the evident demands upon time, strength, personal interests, perhaps life, even, which are entailed in the advocacy of a given reform, men quail. And there are many fighting on in discouragement, seeing no ray of hope to cheer them in the long conflict with evil, but who have no thought of giving up the battle. To all come the stirring words of this old-time reformer, "Deal courageously and the Lord be with the good." It is a splendid call to battle, based on more than a hope that God is with his

valiant soldiers, for the last clause is equivalent to a declaration of fact. It is a prayer which is an affirmation. It means that the good man finds God good; that he who for the sake of Christ and his neighbor dares all things in the path of duty and from this divine motive seeks to reform his age, in any particular, will always find all the resources of divine love and power at his back. God does not waste men. But every one who faithfully stands for the truth in all its practical relations finds the might of the God of truth at his disposal. Acting from the principle of consecration to God, following the methods of the Spirit, and setting before us as our goal, the world made new in the likeness of Christ, we need fear nothing, for God is with us and who can be against?[1] "There is nothing in the world a human soul need ever fear except its own cowardice or want of faith." It is a martial lesson for our soldier striving,—"Deal courageously, and the Lord be with the good."

John Ellery Tuttle.

[1] Julius H. Seeleye: *Duty*. p. 20.

OMRI AND AHAB

1 KINGS 16:23-33

"In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, and reigned twelve years;" etc.

There is not an inspiring suggestion in this whole lesson. The recital of these names and the record of such wickedness depress rather than elevate. Vileness and corruption run riot in the slums, but are worse than leprosy in the palace. The throne was built upon rebellion, whose kings abandoned Jehovah for the sun-god. Royalty adopted for its habits the licentiousness of the most degraded heathenism. Its queen was Jezebel, compared with whom Lady Macbeth was gentleness itself. For twenty-eight hundred years that throne has had a reputation unmatched. Even Omri, who "dealt wickedly above all that were before him," has been eclipsed by those human furies, Ahab and Jezebel. Their place in history is secure, as the vilest among royal mortals who have worn a crown.

When vice and cruelty and tyranny occupy the throne, the doom of the kingdom is assured. A Nero or Caligula in the palace of the Cæsars became a lurid, blazing beacon of despair. As long as human hearts are thrilled by recitals of the Inquisition or paralyzed by slaughters like those that followed the tolling of the bell of Saint Germain, Philip II of Spain and Charles IX of France will stand out in history as human fiends whose crowns none care to wear, except as recast. It was the dying regret of Charles V of Germany that he had not burned Luther

at the stake rather than allow the Reformer to leave Worms alive. These are but representatives of characters such as prove the certainty of hell, either here or hereafter. Human fiends indicate that there must be a hereafter, since the soul does not die. Hatred is more cruel than the grave, as it is more lasting.

It seems more than a coincidence that such as these monstrosities confront the purest faith and morals. Nero's name is as imperishable as the Christian faith he ridiculed and opposed, since he sinned against the brightest light. As long as men read the tragedy of burning Rome, they will remember the only man as emperor who jested while the flames wrought havoc and death. The gates of heaven were crowded with martyrs passing hence, while the brute Caligula disgraced the throne of Augustus by wishing his people "had only one neck that he might break it with one stamp of his foot," and yet his bitterest hatred was launched against the multitudes new-born into the Christian faith. Philip II and Charles IX will figure forever as haters of the Reformers, and Charles V of Germany, the greatest monarch of his century, no less than they. Ahab and Omri are incidentally compared with Asa the upright king of Judah. Over against Israel stood the throne of David and its prophets and people. Omri and Ahab were sinning against the light.

More than this: these apostates from Judah's God were driven on to their wickedness by those who should have known better. Back of Nero was the infamous Messalina, urging on to cruelties untold, her husband needing no such advice. What were Caligula apart from his mother, Agrippina, goading him on in his fiendish cruelties! Charles IX of France would never have signed the order for the massacre of St. Bartholomew but for the assistance of his mother, Catherine de Medici, who ridiculed the timidity of her son. Cæsar Borgia, "one of the greatest monsters

of a time of depravity," was not without his adviser in his sister, Lucretia, whose name stands out among nobles and statesmen of Europe as in character a Jezebel.

What nation or kingdom is proud of such names as these? Not one. What historian points to them as worthy of emulation in the centuries? Such a historian has not been read. They are lurid beacons whose examples are to be avoided, whose teachings have been brutal, whose lives have been curses on all within their reach.

Look upon the names in this lesson we are considering—Jeroboam who "made Israel to sin;" Omri, who "dealt wickedly above all that were before him;" Ahab, surpassing in wickedness even his father Omri, as is recorded, who "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him;" Jezebel, whose character adheres in her name in such a degree as to require no further analysis; Ethbaal, the assassin-king of Sidon, father of Jezebel. What a list! And what did these do? Consummated the rebellion against Judah by building Samaria; established Baal-worship in place of the worship of Jehovah; built a house of Baal, and set an altar therein; brought into the heathen temple the licentious customs of Tyre and Sidon; founded the worship of idols rather than of Baal;—not one redeeming thing mentioned in the list of names or in the record of what they did. The summing up of the narrative reads, "And Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Notice

I. *The choice of the religion declares the heart of the seeker.*

With Ahab, the choice lay between the pure worship of Jehovah and the gross immoralities of the Baal-worship and conduct. Ahab chose the gross sensualism of Sidon. The moral law had no attractions for him. Self-denial was not in his vocabulary. False religions are invented;

and there have been many such false forms. The Book of Mormon, for example, was invented, not inspired. What has been included in the book is accepted as belonging to conduct. Many a convert accepts the religion because of its peculiar tenets. So of the Koran. How else explain its strange hold upon the millions? What is its heaven? Only a sensuous existence beyond. The consummate fruit of the Koran is a Turk; and the Turk chooses the book because it accords with his inclinations. In every instance the man is known by the religion he accepts. By distortions of the truth one may make the Bible other than what it teaches. Some have believed that it taught the right of slavery, and so accepted it. Denominational enthusiasts have each read in its pages some peculiar ideas, some true, others false. Between liberalism and conservatism different standards of living have been taught; and many have been biased in their choice of worship by the restraints or the laxity of what are called the mode of life.

Ahab elected the freedom of idolatry in heathenism. It suited his desires. In order to fortify himself in his choice, he entered into an enthusiasm for heathenism. To make his choice stronger, he married Jezebel, whose parents were adepts in all that the Baal-worship meant. The subtle queen had her hundreds of priests under her beck and control. Samaria became the antagonist of Jerusalem. All that heathenism was, Ahab was. His religion revealed him. Not all Mormons are polygamists, but all Mormons believe in the crime according to what they call the revelation. What one approves declares what he is, although he may leave for others what he does not accept for himself.

II. *People are like what they allow.*

This corruption of the household of the king was not confined to the palace. What wonder that Elijah felt himself alone! There were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and yet the seven thousand had

been so quiet that the prophet Obadiah did not know of them. The proverb "like priest, like people" applies to kings and their people. It was a strange history when in fifty years seven kings had been crowned, four of whom had reached the throne by murder. Think of the social disorder when the people could see the abominable customs of heathenism drive out the worship of Jehovah! What a fall for the children of Jacob, bowing down to an image of the sun-god instead of Jehovah! And these were the ten tribes! What wonder the world is asking now, where the lost tribes are! Nations cannot survive on such lack of principle.

The people may not have been responsible for the sins of Ahab, but they could at least ask whether they should keep silence longer. What have we to do with the corruptions of social life? How far is the community responsible for evils that others approve? "Righteous Lot" was vexed with Sodom at first; but he soon moved into the city. The sins that at first troubled soon annoyed him less. Finally he had grown callous to the influences that once were keen. Doubtless the same law applies in modern times. Our environment gradually conquers us unless we conquer it. The sluggard's garden grows till it looks just as shiftless as its owner. While he sleeps, the weeds that need no cultivation grow. So in morals. When did God ever stop calling because his children were in the minority at the time? Where is Elijah? Where is John the Baptist?

III. *The growth of idolatry.*

The blasphemous reign of Omri and of Ahab did not come in a day. Degradation takes time to develop. Judah had not been without excuse. The reign of Solomon was brilliant but immoral. Then came the reign of Jeroboam, following his ambitious attempts to gain the crown. Political reasons resulted in establishing heathenish forms

of worship. Jeroboam "made Israel to sin" in making the golden calf to represent the God of their fathers of whom he said, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Bold as was the worship appointed in imitation of the religion of Judah, it was yet far inferior to what grew out of it. It was the opening wedge finally and completely separating Israel from Judah. It was devised as being the only means of sustaining the revolted kingdom, under the semblance of giving it the divine right to its existence.

The establishment of the initial form of idolatry paved the way for grosser so-called worship. The nation became a mere toy in the hands of its rulers. Unlike the golden calf made by Aaron at Sinai, that of Jeroboam was not broken; but a half century turned the simple worship of the golden calf to all that was included in the rankest sensual worship of the world as found in Phœnicia. But little more than a generation later, as we have seen, it was said of Omri, "He did worse than all that were before him," a statement to be repeated as it was of Omri's son Ahab a few years later, who outdid his father in provoking the Lord "to anger more than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Just as the seed-time leads to abundant harvest, or the tiny bud at last blooms forth into a shapely flower; the harvest of tares from the seed; the poisonous flower from the innocent appearing bud; so with wickedness. It took but a generation and a half to see Israel ruled by Jezebel, and the tribes of Jacob bowing to Ahab. That had been a long step from the simple worship of the Most High God to the licentious worship of Baal. It was like the planting of poisonous roots in the soil from which would follow a never-ending trouble in dealing with them.

Like a contagion spread the evil roots. The altars to Jehovah were torn down; and in their places from hill to hill altars to Baal were set up. The prophets of God were

hunted down that their oppositions should cease. The few true Israelites were compelled to hide themselves in dens and caves. The last safeguard of religion seemed broken down. The valley of the Jordan fell under the curse. Mount Carmel was crowned with heathenish rites. Horeb, with all its saintly associations, was desolate. A blight had fallen upon all nature; but a deeper blight upon the kingdom. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." As well search a swamp for a place in which to rest, or at midnight expect to see the sun, or dream of happiness in the ravages of the plague, as to look for brightness of vision in such company as these blasphemous characters furnish. All is depressing, all stifling, all deathly. What a contrast between Ahab and Elijah; between Nero and Paul; between Philip II and William of Orange; between Charles IX and Coligny; between Charles V and Luther! Only by looking far away from such monsters do we gain rest.

Sin as a doctrine has something unreal about it, since it is incomplete; but when sin gets the heart of an Ahab or a Jezebel, a Herod or a Judas, it appears in its hateful malignity. Sin made Saul a persecutor, feared and hated; but grace transformed him into the most winsome character of the Christian centuries. Thus does sin smirch and blight the sinner; it makes ugliness instead of beauty; it brings death everywhere. The perspective of sin belongs in life, through which it is manifest in what it makes the sinner do.

IV. *The patience of God.*

Our theme has driven us to look away from those whose hateful lives have depressed. Not one stray gleaming beam of light or brightness in the whole lesson except as it brings us face to face with God! Judging from our own impressions from such malignities, what shall be said of the divine patience? Words fail in utterance. Conviction of

sin grows as we get nearer to God. The deeper conviction comes as we grow better. Calvary reveals the horrid nature of sin far better than Sinai. It was when Paul was ripe for heaven that he confessed himself the chiefest of sinners. The venom of sin becomes more evident in proportion as we grow more and more into the divine likeness; what then must be its awful vision in the sight of God! How infinitely more malignant it must be to him! How patient he is in dealing with such monsters! Their very ugliness brings out the strength and beauty of his character. People sometimes affirm that depravity is an old-fashioned expression; but sin has not changed. Human hearts have not lost a single characteristic. All are not Ahabs or Jezebels, but everywhere when sin is finished it brings forth death.

Yet patience does not retard justice. Retribution belongs to the laws that are broken. There is a proverb that they who take the sword shall perish by the sword,—a proverb often true. Nero felt the justice of being condemned to a disgraceful death by his own senate, from which he escaped by ordering a slave to thrust a sword into his heart. It was retribution when he, who had ordered that not a Hugenot should be left to mock him, suffered untold remorse from the part he had taken in the awful massacre. So Ahab died as was foredoomed by an arrow from the battle-field, and over his blood the dogs and swine held carnival. And Jezebel also died, thrown from her window to the street, to be trodden under the feet of Jehu's horses while her blood flew up against the wall. The end of such lives is like the beginning, only crowded with tragedy. There is no peace to the wicked, and the name of the wicked shall rot.

David O. Mears.

GOD TAKING CARE OF ELIJAH

1 KING: 17: 1-16

"The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah." v. 16.

"Elijah the Tishbite"—the moment you pronounce his name you begin to taste the quality of the man. Some men's names seem to describe them, like the label on the bottle. From the very sound of "Napoleon Bonaparte" or "Oliver Cromwell" or "Abraham Lincoln," you gain some suggestion as to the contents of the man. Elijah's name, like most Hebrew names, has a special meaning of its own. It is made up from "Eli" meaning "My God," and "Jah" the abbreviated form of Jehovah; the complete name therefore meaning "Jehovah is my God." The name suits him and belongs to him as if it had grown out of him like his own shaggy beard, for he devoted his life to recalling the people from the false worship of Baal to the worship of Jehovah who was indeed their God.

Elijah came from Gilead which is bleak, bare and rocky like Cape Ann. Even the scrawny cedars have to look twice to find a place to grow in rugged Gilead. The soil and the climate often affect the man as they do the trees; and the situation of his early life certainly shed its influence upon the character of this sturdy reformer. The people of Gilead were swift, strong and brave like the best of the modern Bedouins. They loved the great solitudes of nature, the mountains, the wilderness, the hidden caves. They scorned the softness of the city and in emergencies they

could live on the scantiest fare. They dwelt by preference under the open sky away from the haunts of men. All these characteristics reappear in the character of the prophet Elijah.

He has often been called "the prophet of fire." The times required a red-hot man, for the nasty iniquity of that day could be burned out of the nation's life by nothing less. Elijah's heart burned with fierce indignation against wrong-doing. His first utterance announced a withering drought as a punishment for wickedness. His words fell hot and scorching from his lips in the denunciation of Ahab and the guilty queen. From the top of Carmel, in the day of the great assize, he called upon God to answer by fire. He finally went out of the world in a chariot of fire. Necessity was laid upon Israel that such a man should be forthcoming. A soft, temperate, mild-mannered man would have made no sufficient impression on the impudent wrong-doers. The hardness of men's hearts was so great that the scorching, radical methods of this prophet were imperative.

The first appearance of Elijah was on the occasion of his stern rebuke to the king of Israel. The presence of a heathen queen with her idolatrous court followers had turned the heart of king and of people from the living God to the degrading worship of Baal. This falling away brought with it the corrupt practices of the Phœnician religion and the moral lapse was grievous. The prophet sternly announced that the wrong-doing would be punished by drought and famine. This was indeed poetic justice; it made the punishment fit the crime. Baal had been held up as the god of fertility and of harvests, the god who presided over the productive and reproductive processes of nature. Now for drought and famine to fall upon the land at the very time when the people had turned away to this alleged god of fertility, was plucking the devil's own club out of his hand to beat him with.

This unusual drought, which is mentioned also by at least one profane historian, continued for three years and was attended with consequences that were fearful. Drought anywhere means suffering and loss, but in that region, lying so directly under the rays of the burning sun, the continued lack of rain and of dew would mean absolute devastation. The whole face of the country was scorched and withered as if the Almighty in his indignation against the lustful and idolatrous practices of the people, had let fall upon it his own consuming and unquenchable fire. The means of subsistence grew scarce and ever more scarce from day to day, and the whole outlook was full of menace. But through it all there was a tender, providential care over the life of this prophet who, by his courage and fidelity, had made himself so essential to the furtherance of God's plans. The birds of the air and the sympathy of a woman's heart are made the agents of a divine purpose to sustain this worker until his work is done.

When the famine fastened itself upon the face of the land, the prophet hastened to the brook Cherith where he could hide securely among the fissures of the rocks. He had denounced the evil course of the nation; he had foretold disaster, and now the distressed people, reaping what they had sown, were in a mood to wreak their bitter resentment on him who had faithfully pointed out the evil of their ways and painted its certain consequences. But secure in the lurking places along the brook, he could bide his time and wait the occasion for the further service he might render to his misguided nation.

The almoners of the divine bounty, we are told, were those strange, fierce, wild birds which fly about the region —"I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." Whether this means that Elijah claimed from them some of their prey or some of the fruit plucked by them from the trees, or whether he killed and ate the birds with their

eggs, has been made the subject of much speculation. The close resemblance between the Hebrew word for raven —"oreb"—and the name of a tribe of people living in the vicinity of the brook Cherith has led many a scholar to suppose that these "Orebites" were the agents of God's providential purpose. However that may be, whether the expression of the fact is to be taken as poetical or literal, whether the agents of the divine purpose were human or otherwise, we have the lesson that God, by means best known to him and varying according to the time and the situation, exercises his care over those who have made themselves the useful servants of his will. The wants of a man like Elijah, during his hiding, were few and simple; and in some wise and sufficient way they were met, to the end that he might finish the work which was given him to do and fight his good fight through to the very end.

But "it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land." The prophet was obliged to change the place of his retreat, and the time not being ripe for a return to his people, he betook himself to Zarephath, a city of Phœnicia on the coast of the Mediterranean.

The famine was sore even there and at the gate of the city Elijah met a widow on her way, as it turned out, to gather a few sticks to cook the last of her slender supply of food. He appealed to her for at least a morsel of bread. She saw that he was an Israelite and by a solemn oath, using the name of his own God, she avowed her own sore distress,—"As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." But though the woman and her son thus stood face to face with absolute and unrelievable want, upon the prophet's further appeal she was moved with gener-

ous compassion and divided with him even that slender dole.

The Bible is marked throughout by the breadth of its hospitality in welcoming to its pages instances of the goodness of outside saints. The narrow claim that would deny all excellence in the unbelieving and unbaptized world beyond, is out of harmony with the spirit of the Scriptures. Abraham found gracious and beautiful kindness in the heathen king of Salem. The spies at Jericho found refuge and protection at the hands of the heathen Rahab who was also a harlot. Boaz found a gentle and winsome goodness in the Moabite Ruth which made her a not unworthy ancestress of the house of David. And Jesus in his picture of the final judgment gathers into his loving recognition those who had been rendering Christian service without realizing the historic or theological source of the impulse which inclined their hearts in the right way. "Lord, when saw we thee?" was their modest and puzzled reply to his gracious words of appreciation. So the record is given of this Phœnician widow who divided her last handful of meal with a famishing stranger and did it not knowing where she was to find her next morsel of food.

But the blessing of the Lord, which maketh rich and bringeth no sorrow therewith, abides ever on uncalculating generosity. When men begin to freely give, they begin also to freely receive. When believers make bold to accept the challenge of the Lord flung down on the closing page of the Old Testament, and bring unhesitatingly their tithes into the storehouse, the windows of heaven are opened and from sources hitherto unsuspected and unavailable, blessings fall upon them so abundant that they have not room to receive them. The man who saves all he has and all he is, loses everything at last; the man who invests all he has and all he is in useful service, saves his all unto the life eternal.

The foreign woman, obeying the impulse of generosity which comes from that Spirit who is not far from any one of us, Jew or Gentile, Christian or pagan, shared her slender resources with the needy servant of the Lord, and as a result, "she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah." There is a worldly sagacity and prudence which withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth only to want; there is a disposition that scattereth in gracious and timely benevolence and it increaseth yet more until the liberal soul, which began to give out of its meagerness, is indeed made fat.

The prophet continued to abide in the home of his new-found friend. It is good for us to see him there, the stern, fierce old warrior in the quiet of a home! It is good to see him with the woman's child in his arms carrying the boy up to his own room and praying over him in the hour of his illness until health is restored. Once withdrawn from the presence of that evil which his soul hated, even as God is angry with wickedness every day, the gentler side of his great heart stands revealed and we see that stern justice is tempered with mercy. The care of Him whose tender mercies are over all his works, was upon this valued servant of righteousness; and in the famine-stricken country, by the brook Cherith, or in the city of foreigners, Elijah proved the high assertion of Hebrew faith that those who wait upon the Lord and do his will shall not want any good thing.

Charles R. Brown.

OBADIAH AND ELIJAH

1 Kings 18: 1-16

"I thy servant fear Jehovah from my youth."—1 Kings 18: 12.

The man doubtless had other feelings toward God than fear. It is, indeed, unlikely that men are ever moved in their relation to the Most High by pure and simple fear unqualified by either love or hate. But of Obadiah's religion fear was clearly the dominant note. The historian introduces him as one who "feared Jehovah greatly," and he himself declares that such has been his habit from his youth.

Jehovah of the Hebrews was to him no myth, but a very real personage, close at hand, faithful to succor and defend his people, but to the disobedient and the wicked very terrible.

In the dreadful famine that was wasting and blasting the land, Obadiah beheld the chastening hand of the Almighty. To rebel against him, the living God, to break his laws, forget his commandments, despise his authority, lay violent hands on his prophets, treat him as though he were no better than Baal or Ashtaroth seemed to this clear-sighted man playing the part of consummate folly.

You mark his fear of God in his reverent treatment of the prophets whom he recognized as God's ambassadors, and therefore clothed with the divine dignity and authority. Witness his attitude toward Elijah. Although a ruler of the land and second only to King Ahab himself, we read

that when the man of God met him in the way, Obadiah fell on his face, as a slave might fall, and cried, "Is it thou, my lord Elijah?" Very sharp is the contrast between this greeting and that of certain other king's officers, described later in the narrative, who, standing with their troops at the foot of the hillock where the prophet sat, cried insolently, "O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly."

The same reverence for God's ministers is seen in the faithful care with which, at no small risk to his own neck, as we may well believe, Obadiah rescued the hundred of them from the bloody hand of Jezebel, hid them by fifties in caves and provided them with bread and water throughout the dreary years of the famine.

This leading trait in the character of Ahab's steward, this fear of Jehovah, suggests as a theme for our consideration,

The Place of Fear as a Religious Motive.

In our endeavor to lead men to God and to righteousness, how far is it proper to set before them the perils of an evil life? This is certainly a timely topic. In few respects is there a stronger contrast than here between the practice of the modern pulpit and that of former days. When you peruse a volume of the sermons used by one of the great preachers of, say, fifty years ago or more, you are astonished, even shocked, at the constant employment of the terrors of the law. Such preaching would not be tolerated today. Even the most conservative of our modern ministers would hardly venture to present the gospel after the manner of Jonathan Edwards or even of Charles G. Finney. It would seem as though, by mutual consent, modern preachers and teachers of religion had agreed to get on without the fear motive. This is not because we deem that there is nothing in God to be afraid of. Surely that man cannot sincerely believe in God at all, who thinks that

one may, without peril, disobey him. We have ceased to say "Fear the Lord," not for the reason that we think of him as never fearful, but because we conceive that there is something ignoble in the appeal to fear. It has been, and still is, the fashion of a certain type of writers on religious questions to speak with contempt of the former ways of preaching as unworthy of an enlightened age. A recent contributor to The Independent, for example, after showing most impressively the reasons for calling this an age of faith, proceeds to say that, though an age of faith it is by no means one of credulity. It is a bad age for the charlatan and the quack and has little use for what he terms "the gold brick of a religion of fear."

Now, if we are not mistaken, it is the dread of such critics as this which has made the modern preacher reluctant to speak of certain things that men ought to fear. He is not a narrow-minded man. Of this he is perfectly conscious, and he does not like to be accused of narrow-mindedness. The menace of evil is hard to present; he shrinks from the task. Moreover, as all agree, the fear motive is by no means the noblest of religious motives; he is therefore easily persuaded to pass it by, and turns to other reasons for faith, which are neither so hard to preach about nor so sharp to hear.

But does he thus escape from the influence of fear? Does he not rather substitute an ignoble fear for a noble one—permitting the dread of man to cover up the fear of God?

This outcry against the appeal to fear, as the use of an ignoble motive, is a curious piece of inattention to one of the fundamental facts of life. As man moves onward and upward through the ages, two spirits attend his upward way: the spirit of Hope which, by setting before him her prizes, induces him to struggle forward, and the attendant spirit of Fear also, which, by pointing out the dangers

that threaten pain, want, death and the like, spurs him onward. It is impossible to say of these motives that one is better than the other. Both are indispensable.

It is interesting to observe that the writer quoted above is the vice-president of a great life insurance company; that is to say, he who speaks so contemptuously of the employment of fear in religion is himself at the head of an enterprise which makes a lavish use of fear in business, a wise fear, as it seems to most of us, and even a noble fear, but very real in view of actual dangers. For the truth is, as all men acknowledge, in every other realm at least than that of theology, that there are quite different and opposite qualities of fear: on the one hand the wise and the good, which may properly control one's conduct; on the other the base and ignoble, which makes of him who obeys it a coward and a poltroon.

Base fear is of two sorts. There is first the fear that dreads an evil which does not exist. To this class belong the blind and senseless terrors of superstition, that lie like a nightmare on the heart of the shuddering savage and keep half the world in the bitterness of an inconceivable bondage. Nor can we of civilized society too confidently boast our immunity from such craven alarms when so many of us are squeamish about sitting with the fatal thirteen at table, or view with apprehension a journey on Friday, or will not even venture to speak of our good health without rapping on wood, forsooth, to scare away the bogies.

The other base fear is that of the coward, the man who dreads a small evil more than a great one: he prefers dishonor to poverty; he likes a lie better than pain; the things that hurt merely the body appear to him more terrible than those that blast and blacken the soul.

We condemn these two men, the superstitious and the cowardly, not for the fact of their fear but for the quality of it. It is, in both cases, a pusillanimous fear because it

is based on a falsehood. On the other hand, we have a sort of fear which, being based on truth, is both wise and honorable.

There is such a thing in this world and in human life as evil. It exists all about us; it touches us occasionally in one way or another; it threatens us continually. Even our friends the Christian Scientists, stoutly as they may deny it, cannot escape this fact. For when they deny all existence to matter, and claim that pain, sickness and the like are but "errors of mortal mind," they are forced, at least, to admit the existence of those errors in the mind. A thought is a thing, though not a material thing, just as real a thing as a hand or foot; an evil thought is an evil thing. A lie in my mind, baffling my intelligence and setting my conduct awry, would be, to say the least of it, as serious a matter as a pain in my foot.

There really is such a thing as evil, and because such a thing exists, there is a place for fear, of the wise, the cautious, the noble type which foresees a threatening peril and seeks a way of escape from it. The safeguards of society are essential to its welfare, and that sense of danger which provides adequate courts of law, police, prisons, schools of medicine, hospitals, sanitary regulations and the like is characteristic of a high order of civilization.

Now when one thinks of man in his relation to God, he finds here as elsewhere the two opposite sorts of fear, the noble and the base. The writers of the Bible are familiar with both varieties and when they speak of fear have sometimes one kind and sometimes the other in view. This explains the confusing fact that fear is praised in one place and blamed in another. Here the message is "Fear the Lord!" and there, "Fear not!" One writer insists that the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, while another classes the fearful with the unbelieving, the false and the abominable who are outcasts from the city of life.

And here too the difference between the two kinds of fear lies in the fact that the one rests on a false and the other on a true conception. One man is afraid of God because he thinks of him as a terrible tyrant, delighting in the pain and torture of his enemies; another conceives of him as a stickler for rites and ceremonies and is filled with dread lest he may have made a mistake in the mode of his baptism, the day he keeps as the Sabbath, or some phrase in his creed; a third suspects God of being forgetful of his promises, a heedless Father, a slack provider, and so is disturbed by anxious and painful foreboding. Such types of fear are superstitious, cowardly, blasphemous; for they convey, at the heart of them, dishonor to our heavenly Father. But while we seek to banish from thought and life ignoble terrors, let us be very careful that we do not at the same time exclude such fear of God as is essential to a true and reverent view of him.

There is to the wicked a fearfulness in goodness. What must a brave man think of a coward? a true man of a liar? the pure-hearted of the moral leper? How can the man of kindness do otherwise than loathe the cruel and the heartless, or the man of forgiveness fail to shrink from the hateful and the malicious? God's spotless goodness is what makes him the dreadful God. The more clearly he is seen to be perfect love, the more terrible he will appear to the loveless and hateful.

Nor must we ever forget the relations of God to the moral law. It is characteristic of law that it has authority behind it, and penalties attached for disobedience. The Golden Rule is not a mere bit of advice which one may accept or not as he chooses. It is defended by divine sanctions, it is enforced by divine authority, and he who dares to break it does so at his peril. Nature, life and the human conscience affirm with one accord that punishment must follow sin,—that the righteous God will by no

means clear the guilty, and fears, standing like prophets about the death-bed of the wicked, point solemnly forward to future judgment and fiery indignation.

But our greatest peril lies not so much in what we may suffer for our sins as in what we may lose because of them. A man may lose himself. He may forfeit his sonship, may miss his Father's blessing and bounty, may shut himself out for all the years of time and the unmeasured spaces of eternity from the helpful spirit of God's grace. A man whose life might have been fruitful, joyful, heroic and like the dawning light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, may, by rejecting love and God and by choosing selfishness, make all his earthly days barren and at the end may pass out into the night, naked and empty-handed,—helpless, hopeless and forlorn. This is life's consummate tragedy, and yet this most fearful of calamities is not remote, but its gray and creeping shadows are close upon us and already enfold, God knows how many a comrade and neighbor.

In the face of such facts as these what faithful preacher, what sincere teacher of religion can keep silent? How can one believe with earnestness or proclaim with power Jesus the Christ as Saviour of the world and at the same time ignore the existence of those things from which the world needs to be saved? How can one pass lightly over human sin, and the divine indignation against sin without losing also the sense of the riches of God's grace. Most aptly do the words of the ancient psalmist suit our modern time:—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." And the immortal song of Moses and the Lamb befits our lips to-day:—

"Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy."

Samuel Lane Loomis.

ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL

1 Kings 18: 30-46

"If Jehovah be God, follow him."

In this passage we climb to the top of Mount Carmel, rising out of the ordinary and above the dead level of the commonplace, into what is striking and dramatic in God's dealing with men. The mountains of Scripture all seem to lift us where we look out upon a wider expanse. Mount Sinai, Mount Zion, Mount Carmel, Mount Hermon, Mount Calvary, Mount of Olives—how full of memories and suggestion they all are! They constitute a mighty mountain chain that rises before us and above us as we utter the names. It would seem almost as if the surface of the earth were sensitive and knowing instinctively that a great occurrence was to mark a given spot, had lifted itself proudly into a mountain peak that it might hold the event up to the attention of the world. It has been well said that when Jesus died on Calvary it became the highest mountain on earth, drawing the eyes and minds of all men unto it by what it lifted up.

The prophet of Israel had proposed a test for the rival claimants upon the people's allegiance. "Send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel," he said. And bring "the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty"—bring them all! And then in the presence of this large company, he cried to the fickle and shifting people, "How long go ye limping between the two sides?" He thinks of a lame man tottering first on one foot and then on the other, as the

people change according to the mood of the hour or the latest indication, from Baal to Jehovah and then from Jehovah back to Baal. He demanded definite decision, without which there can be nothing worthy of being called character. "If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

"And the people answered him not a word!" Their reply to his fervent appeal was an empty silence! In the face of this brave prophet they were afraid to say "Baal"; in the presence of the king and his wicked queen they were afraid to say "Jehovah." Thus they continued to totter, first on one opinion, then on the other, keeping all the while a prudent silence. It is not always true that silence is golden —sometimes it is wooden; it is cheap, weak and cowardly. The people listened respectfully to all Elijah had to say, but their disheartening silence spoke out loud as to their continued indecision.

Then he proposed the test of building altars and laying sacrifices and calling upon the respective deities to answer by fire. The God that answered by fire, the God who vindicated his claims upon the worship of his people, by facts of accomplishment, was to be the God of Israel. The people recognized the fairness of it all and replied at last, "It is well spoken."

The contrast at the two altars was striking. On one side four hundred and fifty priests of Baal; on the other, Elijah standing alone! On one side the well-dressed objects of the royal favor; on the other, Elijah half naked with a leathern girdle about his loins! On one side the fat and sleek idolaters who had been fed at Jezebel's table; on the other, Elijah, gaunt, thin, shaggy, for he was a Nazirite! On one side the claims of Baal, sustained by the king and queen, the ready courtiers and the half-concealed leaning of the people; on the other no visible supporters whatever! But on the one side there was an empty, useless idol, with

all its possible resources in plain sight; on the other, Jehovah, the living God, the source of unseen spiritual forces mightier than legions of soldiers! When we add in the things which were not seen by the careless eye with the temporal things in view, the contest does not seem so unequal as at first appeared.

The people clustered on the mountain side and sat with characteristic Oriental patience. The priests of Baal called loudly upon their god from morning until noon. Like the dervishes of the East, they worked themselves into a frenzy; they frantically cut themselves with knives until the blood gushed out; they shrieked aloud, "O Baal, hear us, O Baal, hear us." They carried forward this pathetic exhibition of desperate earnestness until the time for the evening sacrifice, "but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." There lay the dead bullock slowly decomposing under the intense heat of the sun but there was no sign of any response from the God to whom they had made such heartrending appeals.

In the very hour of their defeat Elijah taunted them with their failure. It is one of the very few instances where sarcasm is employed in Scripture. Sarcasm is a kind of tabasco sauce to be used sparingly and perhaps to be reserved altogether for the use of such reformers as this prophet of fire. "Cry aloud," he said, although they were already screaming as if trying in vain to make their natural voices reach the skies! "He is a god," Elijah added with bitter irony: "either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked"! All this was gall and wormwood to the tired and discouraged priests of Baal. It was rubbing salt and vinegar into the sore place of their humiliating failure. It was truly a strange, wild scene on which the people looked as they saw these false priests smeared with their own blood, rending the air with their shouts, and im-

ploring the empty idol to reveal power which in no wise belonged to it. But their frantic endeavors availed nothing: the sun moved steadily on its course until the day was gone and their opportunity was ended. The hour had come for Elijah to put to the test his claims on God's behalf.

"Come nearer unto me," he said; and the people gave close, eager attention. "He repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down," taking twelve stones according to the original number of tribes. His act was symbolic. It was as if an American in the days of the Civil War had planted the flag beside his altar with its star for every state in the Union, though some were in the very act of falling away! He "cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood." He drenched the altar with water that all possibility of fraud might be removed.

Then in the quiet of that evening hour he offered up his fervent, effectual prayer. It was not long; two breaths will hold it all. Men are never heard for their much speaking. There was no rant, no leaping, no cutting himself with a knife to work up an unnatural frenzy. He was calm and confident, for he addressed himself to the living God who was able to answer. "O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." The words of his prayer fall upon our ears as the serious, intelligent and devout expression of an honest heart.

"Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering." "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God." The God of Israel had answered by facts, by

definite and ascertainable results; and the victory over useless and wicked idolatry was complete. The multitude on the mountain side entered into a new consciousness of the reality of spiritual forces and their shout of triumph, with its joyous note of a returning allegiance to the God of their fathers, echoed and reechoed across the historic Plain of Esdraelon, that had witnessed and was to witness so many victories of right over wrong. And then in solemn awe and reverence, they silently "fell on their faces" and worshiped God.

There are two lessons which I would draw from this dramatic scene. First, it makes a wide difference whether we believe what is true or what is false. It is fashionable, I know, to speak lightly of creeds; it is supposed to be the mark of a progressive mind to say, "No matter what a man believes, if he is only sincere and earnest." All such talk, however, is cheap and weak.

Our beliefs must be brought, so far as lies within our power, to tally with the facts. We cannot build strong character except by thinking about things as they are. Religion is not a set of fancies to be taken up or put away at will. The existence of God, the reconciliation through Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the efficacy of prayer, the genuine aid received through divine grace—all these and other truths of our gospel point to certain definite, unyielding facts. To ignore facts, or to substitute in their place some vague fancies, cannot but result in moral loss.

The four hundred and fifty priests of Baal were sincere and earnest—terribly in earnest—but they failed because their belief did not correspond with the facts. There was no such god as Baal; there is no god anywhere who can be pleased or approached by the sort of rites that were offered to that idol; they were praying to nothing and the whole system was founded on falsity. There was sincerity

enough, leaping enough, bleeding enough, earnestness enough, but there was none to answer, neither any that regarded, for the belief was out of line with the spiritual realities in the case.

It is a mark of mental and moral indolence, therefore, to say that it does not matter what we believe so long as we are sincere. It is for every serious and conscientious nature to make it the unending effort of his life to square his faith with the facts and to shape his belief so that it shall point steadily to spiritual realities as the needle to the pole. No other attitude or purpose could be acceptable to Him, who said, "I am the truth." "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The second lesson is that all the claims of faith must be put on trial and brought to the test of actual accomplishment. There is no real difference which does not make a difference when brought to the test of experience. The claims of theology that really matter can be submitted and must be submitted to the test of producing moral and spiritual renewal, personal enrichment and genuine edification in useful righteousness.

The test on Mount Carmel was but a dramatic representation of the wider and more searching test that had been going on in the lives of the respective adherents of Baal and of Jehovah. It was no mere matter of names, four letters in one case, or seven in the other: it was a question as to the effect of Baal worship and of Jehovah worship on the life of the nation, on the characters of the people. In the one case moral disease was the outcome of false worship, and in the other, moral health came by the worship of the living God. The God who answered by these clear and unmistakable signs was indeed to be proclaimed the Lord.

It is comparatively easy to make enthusiastic claims for many of the systems of man's devising, but let the God who

answers by useful facts be God. Let the religious system that answers by renewed hearts, by finer forms of usefulness, by loftier moral purpose, by increased spiritual energy, be supreme. Let the religion that answers by Christian hospitals for the sick and crippled, by Christian schools for the untaught and the deluded, by Christian homes that give new meaning to the lives of women and children, by Christian churches where God, who is a Spirit, is intelligently worshiped in spirit and in truth—let the religion that in every nation under heaven, Christian and pagan, answers by these ascertainable facts, be lifted to the place of honor and power. If heathenism or infidelity would leave off devising plausible theories, cease its attacks upon the working hypothesis of Christian faith, and only give itself to the production of facts by which those systems might be judged, we should then have something to talk to, besides mere talk. But the very absence of wholesome and permanent results achieved in the moral life of the world by any such claims, is their own condemnation. "By their fruits ye shall know them." When men are eating good figs, they know beyond a peradventure that the wholesome sweetness was not plucked from thistles; and when they are fed upon the best of the grapes, they know that they are indeed enjoying the bounty of the true vine.

Charles R. Brown,

ELIJAH DISCOURAGED

1 KINGS 19: 1-8

"And he requested for himself that he might die," etc.—1 Kings 19: 4.

These are real men and women, consistent enough and not too consistent; they are flesh and blood. The minor characters of the story like that of the great prophet are genuine. How suggestive it is as to the true elements of greatness that the king and queen of Israel should only serve as a dark background for the country prophet, the man of God who told the truth; but it is always so, when time has furnished its perspective; the only greatness which endures is that of character, while mere temporary prominence of position counts for nothing.

Ahab was wicked and weak. Jezebel was wicked and strong, and as always the weaker leaned upon the stronger character. Ahab was bad enough alone; the record reads, "But there was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah;" but the evil in him was multiplied tenfold, when his downward tendencies led him into the unholy alliance with the idolatrous Jezebel, whose influence is summed up in the words, "whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." Her name has come to stand for all that is malignant and cruel. Like the name of Borgia, it has a symbolic meaning and an association which clings to it. No mother of the worst sort would name a daughter after her, queen though she was. She was the evil genius of the king. When he was timid or

hesitated to carry out his evil thoughts, she only planned more desperate wickedness, and shamed or led him into it. When he faltered she was at hand to stir him up. The case of Naboth and the vineyard is probably only a sample of many like illustrations of his wife's relation to his weak will. A man can be bad enough alone, but the evil in him is raised at least to the second power, if he has in his wife an unscrupulous adviser, always at his ear and near his elbow, especially if she be of the stronger will. Ahab and Jezebel made a partnership in sin able to carry on the worst designs to disastrous success; it was an ideal combination of evil.

After the defeat of the Baal worshipers on Carmel it was natural that Ahab should go to tell Jezebel his wife what had happened—she evidently had not been a witness of the tragic scene on Carmel but had remained at Jezreel. His first impulse was to take his trouble home and in his chagrin take counsel of his wife. What had moved the husband to fear only stirred Jezebel to wrath. She had no fear of Jehovah or his prophets and swore by all the gods she knew to take a speedy vengeance.

Let us look now at Elijah. The swift race to Jezreel, where Ahab also rode to meet his queen, was no part of his escape. It was indeed to seek the center of danger, the capital of Israel, where Jezebel awaited tidings of the easy triumph of the four hundred priests over the shaggy prophet of the wilderness; the wild man from the woods he may have seemed to her, who had happened once or twice to make a shrewd guess at the things which were to come,—wise only to foretell the weather.

And Elijah fled to Beersheba. Was it in an unworthy fear, or in a wise and guided prudence? Beersheba was on the southern border of Israel, on the edge of the desert, the place of approach to or of departure from the land of promise. There Elijah went with his attendant, then dis-

missed him and went on alone a day's journey into the wilderness.

Elijah was no coward. The scenes through which he had just come had shown that, and those which follow later in his life, where he dared the wicked king, again showed that he had not lost his courage, nor was afraid to give God's message of warning. It is by no means always a sign of cowardice to flee from danger. What good would have come to Israel or to the cause of Jehovah if his prophet had stayed to be assassinated? There is no glory in foolhardiness. It shows more courage to obey the signal to retreat than to stand, where there is no further good to be gained and the only opportunity is to die. It is sweet to die for one's country, but it is possible often to serve it more by living. So Elijah fled for his life, not of necessity because he prized it for itself, but because it was worth more to Israel and to Israel's God than his death would be.

But beyond this mere escape, there were other moving causes which might naturally have had their part in Elijah's swift retreat to the wilderness.

It was in accordance with the manner of his life. It was natural for him to seek seclusion. In solitude he spent his days and years—at least away from his fellow men and from the centers of their lives and activities, away from the excitements of crowds and courts. Only at the call of duty did he emerge to do the errand on which God had sent him, and that he did with unflinching energy and boldness. But, his public work done, he hied him back to the brook or to the desert where his anchorite life was lived, like Peter the hermit, who left his monastic life only to make pious pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but, moved by the oppressions to which the Christians there were subject, was stirred to rouse Christendom to the first crusade to capture the city for Christ; then, his mission ended, he

returned to his quiet life of poverty and prayer. There is much that is attractive in such a character. No personal ambition plays a part in such a man's motives. No selfish desire for notoriety or power is mingled with his aims. He only acts as a servant of God to accomplish a needed work, and sacrifices all his inborn love of retirement and obscurity to accomplish the purpose which presses on him as the great obligation of his life. The prophet might have gone more slowly to his retreat, but that was to him always the most attractive place. The origin and early life of this recluse prophet is hid in mystery. How he grew up and where he got his call to be a messenger of God, we do not know. Suddenly, like a meteor, he appears before the king, threatens the dearth, and then as mysteriously disappears. So from time to time, clad in skins he comes unheralded upon the scene, and when he has given his message as suddenly withdraws. His work on Carmel is done and he seeks again the solitary place in which his life is lived. It is only of a piece with all the rest. It was the most natural thing for him to do.

But when he comes to his journey's end, he is overwhelmed with discouragement and for the while seems almost in despair. What does that mean? First of all he was tired, and that accounts for much. He had been making almost superhuman exertion. Even the physical part of it might have taxed the energies of the trained athlete. The exciting tragedy on Carmel, the long race to Jezreel, the swift escape to Beersheba and the day's trudging into the wilderness; surely these are enough to account for the great wave of fatigue which swept over him. It was no new experience; it is an old and familiar one to us, that weariness is often accompanied with discouragement. At such a time one often wonders whether the battle is worth fighting any longer, whether one might not as well lie down and die.

Then doubtless he was disappointed at the outcome of it all. He wished to win Israel back from its false gods to the worship and following of Jehovah, and he had expected it as the result of all that had occurred. Through him the Lord had given as mighty a demonstration of his power as could well be conceived. He had made himself known by fire, which was the most familiar symbol of his presence in the older dispensation. He had responded to the prayer of his servant. He had overcome the physical hindrances with which the priests of Baal had sought to encumber their challenge. The demonstration of his presence and his power had been complete, his enemies themselves being judges. And now, why should not all acknowledge Jehovah to be the Lord? Why should not queen, court and people admit that they had trusted in false gods who were no gods at all. But alas, he finds, after the first impression, only a fiercer anger to have been stirred up against him and his Lord. Ahab is of no account in the matter. Jezebel is not humbled, but angry with that insane wrath which we call being mad. The people are only stupified and by no means persuaded to follow Jehovah. And Elijah's heart sinks within him—what is the use of his protest, nay, of his proof? He is discouraged and for the moment in despair. So many a preacher of the gospel, in a less tragic form and in a later day has striven with the followers of the false gods who are ever misleading the people, and after what seemed to him some unanswerable argument, some irresistible appeal, finds those with whom he has pleaded in the same dull attitude as before and is disheartened. Nothing, he thinks, can move these sluggish souls and there is no use in his continued effort. But it is only a temporary state of mind, and after he has rested and listened in quiet to the still small voice of God and to his exceeding great and precious promises, he is ready to renew his message and again to give his testimony.

This experience of Elijah is an illustration of one of the laws of human life, which we may call the law of reaction. We might expect a startling manifestation in one like him. His life was one of startling experiences. He was not like the prophets who went before him, nor like his immediate successor Elisha, a prophet of the city, living among men and sharing their experiences. His was a strong and stormy nature, more liable to excessive alternations of feeling than that of other men. One life may move along its level course like a train passing over a broad prairie, but mountain tops are separated by valleys and he who treads the heights must ordinarily pass through the depressions which lie between them. Elijah has his periods of reaction. He had been in the crowd, now he must be alone. He had been full of courage, now he is in self-distrust and timidity. He had been buoyant with hope, now he is in the depths of despondency.

Is this the ideal of a godly life? Is this experience a reflection on his character or on his faith? Or is this only an indication of his humanity, that he was like the rest of us?

We think it was the latter. One who is not greatly elated by prosperity is not apt to be deeply depressed by adversity. One whose joys are moderate is apt to be temperate in his expressions of grief. The pendulum will swing in about equal measures to the right and to the left. That action and reaction are equal is a law of physics not only but of life. The hero is born in the emergency; he may not expect to be that in its anticipation; he may tremble at its remembrance. The test is what he is and does in the very hour of his trial.

Only the life of Jesus the Christ is tranquil and serene. He was tired more than once, but once at least he found restoration in doing good and found meat to eat which

others knew not of, and in the great emergency of his life was calm and self-controlled as in the home at Bethany. His was the only life filled with the Spirit without measure and in the constant consciousness of the Father's presence and approval he moved serene. In the sense of that continuous presence of which Elijah has his assurances from time to time, the followers of the Christ may not escape from but experience the least of these human reactions and come to the most unbroken enjoyment of the divine peace.

George M. Boynton.

ELIJAH ENCOURAGED

1 KINGS 19:9-18

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee."—Isaiah 41: 10.

Elijah's panic is already passed. He has had a good sleep, two square meals and plenty of outdoor exercise. The journey across the wilderness and the stiff climb to Horeb have done much to restore the nerve of the hardy Gileadite. He is no longer praying that he may die while fleeing for his life. Elijah has recovered from his collapse. We must keep the last lesson in mind as we take up this one.

But Elijah's heartache is not gone. He is yet far from being his old self. His tread is strong, but his shoulders droop and his eye is downcast. As he halts at the mouth of that mountain cave, you would never guess he was the man who strode into the ivory palace of Jezreel crying "As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand." He could not now face Ahab, or laugh at the poor priests of Baal, or smite Israel into silence with the rebuke, "How long go ye limping between the two sides?" All his old enthusiasm, his confidence, his mastery are lost. For he is full of doubts, and cannot reconcile his experience with his expectation. He can no longer trust the old convictions that gave motive to his course. Through these weary years during which his voice alone has rung the knell of Baalism, his heart of power has been that he was sure of God. There was never a question as to the result of the conflict. When the issue was reached the word of God's messenger would utterly and forever rout the hated

pretender. But, behold, it is not so! Jezebel and her crew are still unterrified and determined. Elijah's faith in God's dealing is shaken to its foundations. And it is useless for him to attempt again his prophet's task by the light of past visions. He must have some new and mightier assurance of God's faithfulness before he can put his hand once more to God's work. It is for this he has come to Horeb.

As the twin lights of Thatcher's Island suddenly reveal to the storm-driven vessel how far she is off her course, and how desperate is her plight, so this twice put question to Elijah on the lonely mountain brings out at once the dread fact that he has lost his bearings and is drifting to despair. Yet it is not with him quite as with the ill-fated craft. He has not simply drifted to Horeb, or misdirected his steps by a false reckoning. A real and reasonable hope, though doubtless a feeble and perhaps largely unconscious hope, has prompted his way to the place where Moses stood, where the glory of Jehovah was visible upon the awful mount and where the majesty of the divine law which makes for righteousness was forever declared. There he would go and see if before the ancient and unviolated altar of God's holy mountain, some fresh revelation might not come to him whereby he should once more be made sure of God. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" sounds the voice. And he said, "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." There is more here than a mere excuse for hiding. If a cave was all Elijah was after he might have fled to the heights of his native Gilead, where there were fastnesses he knew well. He went to Sinai because it was Sinai, and in the hope that he might find the God of Sinai. When we get this view of Elijah's

flight it takes on dignity and a deeper pathos. He is no longer merely running from death; his prolonged effort is to escape despair. It is not about Jezebel he is most concerned; rather about Jehovah. He has lost hold of Him, and the cry of his heart as it comes back to sensibility after the mad terror in which he fled from the queen's threat, is the cry of that other despairing soul, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat!" It was natural then that Elijah should go to Sinai if haply he might get there a fresh revelation of God. And he is not to be altogether blamed for his quest. The voice that greets him is not a sharp rebuke. It draws him out, discloses to him his heart's bitterness and need and puts him in the way of blessing. After all there is something fine in this figure of Elijah, gaunt and sad-eyed, backed against the grim mount as he waits for God to come to his relief.

Other aspects of his temper at this hour are not admirable. There is a deal of pride in his explanation of his course. "I, even I;" we cannot mistake the injured tone with which he puts forward his own action as praiseworthy while he suggests the failure of God to defend his faithful servant. Elijah feels that he has done his part; done it heroically, unswervingly; he has brought on the issue, and then he has been left unsupported. The cause is lost; nothing more can he do. Pride, anger, doubt, complaining all come out in these words by which Elijah defends himself, the very words in which also may be felt the true longing for God of this troubled heart. We lament these signs of weakness in the prophet, yet they bring him nearer to us. For so our actions often show this mixture of good and evil motives. Into our jealousy for God, and impatience over his seeming defeat, is wrought no little of self-esteem and mortified pride and irritation at the failure of our good service.

A teacher abandons her class of boys after some particularly disappointing outbreak, and in the utterance of her despair of doing more for them, discloses her wounded pride which resents such humbling. The reformer who has carried an election only to find the city slipping back into the old ways of corruption, becomes a common scold in his chagrin that all his labor should count for nothing, while his adversaries laugh at his impotence. And now and then a minister flings himself out of the pulpit, storming at the failure of the church, because his plans are balked and his self-denial goes unappreciated. In all this zeal for God that cries for judgment, there is so much of human passion eager for a personal vindication. When we feel impelled to compose imprecatory psalms we may often find that we are so grieved with those that rise up against God, chiefly because we count them our enemies. So the temper in which Elijah waited on the mountain for a vision of Jehovah, is one that we can appreciate; a heavy and restless heart in which welled up both good and bad emotions; where faith was struggling with doubt, and pride with shame, and the impulse to complain against God beat against a longing to trust him again.

Then came the revelation, a magnificent drama of nature in which the elements fought for the mastery. The scenes were exquisitely adapted to Elijah's mood. The fury of the wind, the rocks crashing from their heights, the ceaseless roll of the thunder, the blinding bolt of light—all these features of the mountain storm spoke an old and familiar message to the son of the mountains. They brought back to him days long past, the imaginings of his boyhood visions, the ideas of God that formed his youth and woke those first enthusiasms that drove him to his prophet's life. But now they did not comfort his sore heart. There was in them no promise, no assurance of God's support. The raging of the elements only increased the

raging of Elijah's soul. Are the winds Jehovah's angels? the darting flames his ministers? Where then was the victory of Jehovah's judgment on Carmel? Elijah watched the tempest till its power was spent. And it brought him no help. The Lord he sought was not there.

But in the hush that followed there came to his ear "a still small voice," *a sound of gentle stillness*. And what a silence it is that falls in the wilderness when the storm blows over, when the sun comes out again and shining pearls drop gently from the tips of the bent boughs, and you hear through the clean air the far-off, faint rumble of the driven thunder, and near by the earth drinking in the grateful rain!

In the stillness that came down upon the bruised and shaken mount, Elijah heard the voice of God. At last his heart was touched, thrilled, subdued; he wrapped his face in his mantle and went forth humbly to listen to the word of guidance. Jehovah was here, in the sunshine as he had not been in the storm, in the silent and unheeded forces that were restoring the ravage of the tempest, as he had not been seen in those loosed furies that smote the cliffs into pieces. God had other messengers than the winds; other methods than swift overthrow. A whisper might mark his presence no less than a whirlwind. If Elijah's method of attacking Baal had not resulted in the success that Elijah expected or that he felt it deserved, doubtless there were other ways in which Jehovah could compass his ends.

It does not appear that Elijah caught the full meaning of the parable at once. The fact that the question which reveals his disheartened temper is put to him again after he hears the voice in the stillness and that he answers it in precisely the same words as before indicates that it took time for him to shake off his heaviness of spirit, and to adjust his mind to the new view of his prophet's duty. He

is not at once his old self. He never will be again his old self. And he must grow by meditation and by practise into the greater Elijah he is to become.

But at once he gets some plain and instructive orders. He is to go back to his post, and to prepare the way for a gradual but certain revolution, to anoint new kings and a new prophet who shall accomplish in their own ways the judgment which seems to have slipped through Elijah's hands. And by and by it shall appear that he who thought himself left alone on the side of Jehovah has helped to hold stedfast a silent but strong force of faithful hearts. There is much for Elijah to reflect upon in this outline of a new campaign. It means a different career for him, with changed undertakings and aims. And he did change; his powers were exercised in quieter ways; upon Elisha, and the schools of the prophets, and the common life of Israel. He is Elijah to the end, but the lesson taught him when he fled to Horeb wrought a confidence in gentleness as a power of God that rounded his character and enriched his spirit.

It is a great lesson for every tired and discouraged heart. When one has tried hard, held on bravely, done his best and utmost in outspoken and mighty effort for a good cause, only to see no enduring result, then he needs to go to Horeb, or to read Horeb's parable nearer by. To watch the patience of God, the vast, slow and silent forces he commands, his use of roundabout and far-brought influences, his yielding yet persisting and waiting without faltering, all this is to get a new assurance and a firmer courage.

We are not to disparage force, only to see that there are different kinds of force. And the more violent and aggressive kinds have their place. Right must sometimes attack wrong in fierce and open conflict. Elijah's work hitherto had not been a failure. Carmel's triumph was no

useless spectacle. The effect of it on those thousands still true to God must have been tremendous; the check it put on the Baal-worship left its mark on Israel. Elisha's work was easier therefor. God has use for the aggressive temper; the very stones would cry out if there was never a voice raised to denounce evil or to champion the cause of Christ.

And yet it is true, and every zealous and hard-working disciple needs to learn this truth, that the supreme figure of a successful servant of God is of one who wins by gentleness. The whole picture from which this figure stands out is full of meaning. John the Baptist, whose task it was to go before our Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, had come into his hour of discouragement and doubt. And when Jesus had sent back to him a message of reassurance it seems that his own soul was made sorrowful at the small result of his mighty works. And he began to upbraid the cities wherein most of them were done because they repented not. But soon his heart was steadied as from above and he looked up to answer with a confession of joy in the Father's better way. And then, as if reaching out for all who felt themselves defeated and helpless he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden . . . Take my yoke . . . for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And it is in relating the events of this period in his ministry that the prophecy is recalled, "Behold, my servant . . . He shall not strive, nor cry aloud . . . A bruised reed shall he not break . . . Till he send forth judgment unto victory."

Elijah's vision of God on Sinai is interpreted to us in Christ. He is the wisdom of God and the power of God. And his mighty constraint is the constraint of love.

William E. Strong.

ELIJAH TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN

2 Kings 2: 1-11

"And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

The passing of Elijah, described in these nobly imaginative verses, however mysterious and surprising to us, was at least in fine keeping with what else we are told of him. From his beginning he is represented as a person of weird and unexplored mystery, a spirit of life rather than a closely identified and catalogued individual. He seemed to belong to that middle realm on whose borders we all feel ourselves so often encamped. "Alone, alone, alone," was his reiterated cry. "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," as another Melchizedek, an earlier Christ, he came and went like a spirit of the air, who had control alike of his appearances and hidings. "As Jehovah thy God liveth," said the baffled and bewildered Obadiah, "there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not here, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it will come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of Jehovah will carry thee whither I know not." Wild, isolated, intermittent in his appearances, "the original type of the hermit, the monk, the Puritan," he moved like a comet of unknown and ominous orbit, awakening both fear and hope in his passing. To the ancient rabbis he seemed "to be the fiery Phinehas returned to

earth, or an angel hovering on the outskirts of the world." He was "the immortal one; the eternal wanderer, who appears, ever and anon, to set right the wrongs of earth, and repeat the experiences of ages past." "As Jehovah of hosts liveth, before whom I stand," was his constant claim for his authority; a claim which seemed to be borne out by all his people could learn of him. Even still, it is said "a seat is placed for him to superintend the circumcision of the Jewish children," and a door is set wide open for his coming at the observance of each new passover. "When goods are found and no owner comes, when difficulties arise and no solution appears, the answer is, 'Put them by till Elijah comes'." A spiritual presence rather than a teacher, he did not come to lay down laws, but to manifest a life; that invisible life just beyond the bounds of human sense. To reveal that, and its authority, was his mission; not to predict the future, or to organize the present. His voice was for that higher allegiance of the soul to the invisible Jehovah, whose eye and rule are over all his works.

With such a life, his death was in highest accord. For one thing, it occurred in the same homeland of Gilead, from which he had issued on his career of inspiration and protest. Death is ever of the nature of a return. Whether we say, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," emphasizing the decay of the body, or, in more exalted language, speak of it as the return of the spirit to God who gave it, it is ever homeward in its direction. With the sensible approach of our departure, the heart turns naturally to its beginnings, as the yacht rounds its stake-boat for the run back to its familiar moorings. Jacob's charge to his son Joseph, as he felt the call of the other country, becomes ours: "Bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: but when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt—bury me in their buryingplace." Even for our bodies we desire to be

gathered home; for our spirits to come again into the eternal presence from which we feel we have come out. Life is a circuit, and returns again to the place of its beginning. So Elijah recrossed the river to his homeland; a figure of death which has strongly impressed itself upon the faith and the literature of the Church in all ages. "Going home" has been the almost universal language of a heart as it has drawn near to the far country, a sentiment which has done much to take away the fear of that great change, and to throw about it the familiarity of past scenes revisited.

Not so commonly in our experience, but quite as ideally, his death was not with the decay of his vital powers, with weakness and pain, but in their full maturity. He came to his "grave in a full age, like as a shock of grain cometh in in its season." There was no staggering, and no suffering. Though his way was down into the valley of the river, he met it as a conqueror, not as a victim. There was no drooping, however patiently and graciously, to the faintness and shadowiness of the Sheol of his people. Death came to him while he was in full vigor, and under the daily guidance of his Master. "Jehovah hath sent me as far as Bethel." "Jehovah hath sent me to Jericho." "Jehovah hath sent me to the Jordan." There the dark river "divided hither and thither," and he passed over it, not under it. There was no pining or revulsion of heart. He took death, as he had previously taken life, as the will of Jehovah, and with equal welcome. He could say with the apostle of a later day, "O death, where is thy victory?" The story seems to teach us that the far too usual decline and suffering of life toward its close have somehow gotten in by false permission, and should not be so; indeed, will not be so when we understand life better, and know better how to live it as it is given to us to live. "For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we

should live together with him." There is a larger ministry for health to be wrought out in the faith and experience of the Church. Sickness and sorrow are much too prevalent, against which all good human endeavors should be enlisted, as is now being done increasingly, in the hope of a better day when none, even of earth, shall say, "I am sick."

Elijah's death was rather a call of his God to bear his peculiar message of the reality of the spiritual presence into the very region and shadow of death, to illumine that dark sanctuary with it. Death to the people of Israel of his day, even more than with us, was a gloomy and depressing event. Its associations were all downward. Under the earth, cavernous and shadowy, lay the abodes of the dead. Without vigor or cheer their spirits survived pitifully, as prisoners of the dungeon, without hope of release. From them forever were passed away the grateful and life-giving streams of the upper world they had left with vain regret. God's power with them had slackened, and his face was turned away. Only "fading, still fading," was their portion. Against this direction and pallor of death the imagery of these glowing verses sets itself strongly, and none too strongly for the occasion. The prophet's flight was upward, not downward, and with even greater power and glory than his surprising life had been lived. Death with him was not the withdrawal of the God in whom he had trusted, nor the lame halting of a spent force which could sustain him no longer. He mounted up with wings as eagles; still, as during his life, "he rose up as a fire, and his word blazed as a torch." Chariots of fire and horses of fire accompanied him. The wind, in all Hebrew literature the symbol of the divine Spirit, rose in might about him to the volume and strength of a tempest, and he "went up by a whirlwind into heaven." He who had come and gone in his ministry as a breeze from the invisible, as a tempest unwearied and exhaustless, did not sink down at

the last, breathless and forsaken. Or, to use the imagery of nomad life which is certainly included in this figure, his translation was with prancing horses and the company of a militant host. He was one of a celestial troop, equipped and caparisoned for endless victory. Elisha, looking upwards, cried, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" His master was gone, but not along the earth; much less down into its dreary depths. "They sought three days, but found him not." It was only in far distant ages, on "a high mountain apart," that other disciples of that same life of the Spirit saw him again in vision with others of like celestial temper, true expressions of the eternal faith of man in the immortality of the soul

While this, as all similar episodes in the life of the spirit, is told in the language of sentiment, and is addressed to the faith of the heart rather than to the logic of the mind, it has proven none the less conclusive to all who have considered it sympathetically and spiritually. The human heart asserts immortality even when the mind is not confident. It is one of the great presuppositions of life, to doubt which yields little immediate profit to the individual, and no considerable guidance for others. However it may be doubted in one generation, the next takes up the immortal hope again, and basks in its reasonable expectations as though they had never been questioned. It is a faith of the race which will not down, however often doubted, or decided in the negative. While each particular instance which records it, as this one, may be questioned, because of its symbolic form, or for other reasons, its essential truth for the soul abides, suffering little permanent loss from the challenges to which it is subjected. Perhaps, in the nature of the case, it is a truth which cannot be demonstrably put for the mind, separate from other considerations. Certainly, no such decisive statement occurs in the

Old Testament, and perhaps not elsewhere. Those to whom the evidence available for its proof seems inconclusive may still find room for doubt, if inclined to it. But faith in it lingers on in the heart of the race, and even increases with each new gain of life, as persistent and seemingly undying as the stories in which it is embodied. Whatever difficulties may be in the way of believing, to content oneself with doubting is still more difficult. No more persistent faith under like obstacles has ever marked the history of man. Sorrow and the blackness of death have only increased its clearness, as the night brings out the stars. Phoenix-like, the immortal hope rises ever from its own ashes, and, overcoming our doubts, maintains for itself an abiding residence in the home of the soul.

One other consideration belongs to this lesson: the bequest of Elijah's life to him who succeeded him. "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit [the portion of the first-born] be upon me," prayed the faithful Elisha who poured water on the mighty prophet's hands during his earthly ministry. And the answer was, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." So Elisha became the heir of Elijah's spirit, widely as he differed from his master in both mood and ways. "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha," said those of the sons of the prophets who saw the young prophet's return over the river once again divided by the all-conquering mantle. "And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him." From other evidences of this quiet man we might not have formed so high an opinion of his rank, for while (quoting Dean Stanley's vivid description) "the succession was close and immediate, it was a succession not of likeness but of contrast. The whole appearance of Elisha revealed the difference. The very children laughed when they saw the change, and watched the smooth, well-shorn head of the

new and youthful prophet going up the steep ascent, where last they had seen the long, shaggy locks streaming down the shoulders of the great and awful Elijah. The rough mantle of his master appears no more after its first display. He uses a walking staff, like other grave citizens. He was not secluded in the mountain fastnesses but dwelt in his own house in the royal city, or lingered amidst the sons of the prophets, within the precincts of sacred colleges. His life was not spent, like his predecessor's, in unavailing struggles, but in wide-spread successes. He was sought out not as the enemy but as the friend and counsellor of kings. One king was crowned at his bidding, another consulted him in war, another, on the treatment of his prisoners, another, in the extremity of illness, another, to receive his parting counsels. 'My father,' was their reverent address to him. Even in far Damascus his face was known. He never actively interposes to protest against the idolatry or the tyranny of the court. Even in the revolution of Jehu he takes no direct part. There is no express teaching handed down. Even in his oracular answers there is something uncertain and hesitating. His deeds were not of wild terror, but of gracious, soothing, homely beneficence, bound up with the ordinary tenor of human life. When he smites with blindness, it is that he may remove it again; when he predicts, it is the prediction of plenty, and not of famine. And when, at last, his end comes, in a great old age, he is not rapt away like Elijah, but buried with a splendid funeral; a sumptuous tomb was shown in after ages over his grave." His life was gracious and gentle, full of the common maxims of good living, abounding in goodness and mercy, without strangeness or bitterness, teaching us that though the divine Spirit may be sometimes weird or marvelous in his coming, so dramatic and exceptional as to awaken terror rather than peace, yet, being come, he "distils as the dew; as the small rain upon the

tender grass, and as the showers upon the herb," and is fitted for the refreshment and prosperity of the whole life of man. Without Elisha we should be left, at this point of the sacred story, without the sense of the domestic worth and prevalence of God's greater gifts in the world, which, having come perhaps in grandeur like the storm in the sky, dispense themselves in gentle ministries to all. Through his use of the double portion of Elijah's spirit we learn that not those lives only which are lived at a distance from "the daily round, the common task," are divine and do the will of God, but those also which, having received the holy unction in more or less striking ways, know how to distribute it in quiet and usual habits from day to day; as Lowell says in his "Glance behind the Curtain:"

> "Truth only needs to be for once spoke out,
> And there's such music in her, such strange rhythm,
> As makes men's memories her joyous slaves,
> And clings around the soul, as the sky clings
> Round the mute earth, forever beautiful,
> And, if o'erclouded, only to burst forth
> More all-embracingly divine and clear:
> Got but the truth once uttered, and 'tis like
> A star new born, that drops into its place,
> And which, once circling in its placid round,
> Not all the tumult of the earth can shake."

Elisha's long sixty years of gentle prophethood, and his peaceful death according to the laws of life, are as ministrant of the divine presence in the world as the more surprising and thrilling experiences of his great predecessor, and far more prophetic of the maturer life of the race which came to its full revelation in the "grace and truth" of our Lord Jesus Christ. While the marvelous life and the translation of the one prophet serve well to connect in our minds the life of the spirit with its heavenly source and power, and to give hope and comfort to those who are

drawing near to the hour of their departure, the long and useful career of the other offers a helpful program for the life that now is, for all who desire to do the will of God in present days. And these two manifestations of the divine life, however different in expression and realm, are of the same Spirit.

Willard Scott.

ISRAEL REPROVED

AMOS 5:4-15

"For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live."

Amos, whose words are inserted in these lessons between the careers of Elijah and Elisha, followed them both, appearing on the scene about fifty years after Elisha's death. Of the prophets whose messages are grouped in the Bible in books bearing their names, Amos was, probably, the first, and presents to us a somewhat new type of prophet.

Elijah and Elisha were not so much teachers, unfolding new phases of truth, as men of action, emphasizing by their deeds and personalities certain familiar and fundamental truths and participating at times prominently in political affairs. Amos, whose life is largely veiled in mist, but whose heraldings ring out with clarion tones, was peculiarly and distinctly a preacher and teacher.

A herdsman and dresser of sycomore trees, from near Tekoa in the southern kingdom, he proceeded to Bethel, the ecclesiastical center of the northern kingdom, to utter the prophetic rebukes, his God-given messages. The rejection of his proclamation was well-nigh inevitable. A man of lowly occupation, neither royal nor priestly in his antecedents, coming from the poorer kingdom of Judah to the more prosperous and opulent kingdom of Israel, bringing not appreciation but condemnation, foretelling not triumph but defeat, what wonder that he received priestly denunciation and the scorn of the king!

His message was spurned, and he returned to Tekoa and his humble tasks, having been absent, apparently, a very brief time. He flashed forth from obscurity like a meteor, and disappeared as quickly, but in his brief course revealed to the observant beholder celestial principles and forces.

He combated the current conception that the attention and affection of Jehovah were limited to the Hebrews, disclosing the distasteful truth that he was concerned with other nations, guided their ways, used them as instruments in his hands, and passed judgment upon them as their supreme Sovereign.

The Hebrews had ever relied on the belief that Jehovah, possessing no other people, would not desert them nor permit their destruction, for then he would become the God without a country, the scorn of surrounding peoples. That his hand might be upon other nations and his heart for them was a belief that would sweep away the foundation on which popular confidence was built, and was a teaching to be resented and bitterly resisted.

The prevailing Hebrew faith did not deny the existence of the gods of other nations; and that Jehovah was the only God was no welcome announcement, however much it exalted him, for while they might remain the chosen people, the other nations would also be Jehovah's in a way; and this their jealousy spurned. The teaching of Amos was the dawn of that day which disclosed the true nature of all other deities to be what the sunlight shows the ghosts of the graveyard are—nothing, absolutely nothing but the creation of a misguided imagination.

How masterly and dramatic his approach to the rebuke that he has for them in the opening of the book! They listen to his condemnation of Syria on the north, Tyre on the west, Gaza and Ashdod to the southwest, Judah to the south, Edom and Moab and Ammon to the

southeast and east. As the regal bird circles and then like a flash darts to its prey, so suddenly he smites Israel, startling his astonished hearers by measuring out to them similar wrath and divine punishment. Had the condemnation been against them alone, it would have been more bearable, but to be huddled under the scourge with their despised neighbors was exasperating. Mercilessly the blows of rebuke follow each other, startling them as did the Galilæan peasant eight hundred years later the temple traders.

Amos seemed to fail, for his message did not carry conviction or secure reformation; but his labors were not in vain in the Lord. The arrow that was avoided fell to the ground, but having life in itself, it rooted and grew and became a great tree, of whose fruit other generations have partaken and been blessed. The declarations and intimations of Amos have become integral parts of more than one religious faith.

The verses of this lesson contain many suggestions, one of which, at least, is fundamental, namely, the relation of God to persons and places.

Ever have the presence and favor of God been associated with localities hallowed to him. Remember Jacob's Bethel, Moses and the burning bush, Sinai with its splendor and terror, the ark of the covenant, the Most Holy place, the temple, Jerusalem. Grecian mythology had Mount Olympus, the Moslem seeks Mecca, the Christian has consecrated church buildings. Every religious faith has centers, trysting-places for God and man, hallowed by religious association, consecrated with impressive ritual, and supposed to be especially precious in the sight of the deity worshiped. So strong is this conviction or sentiment, that in the migrations of past ages tribes have lost or been separated easily from the faith of their fathers when they journeyed far from these sacred shrines; and

many in our day seem to lose sight of God, to pass from his presence and to find release from responsibility to him, as soon as they leave behind the village church or the city mission and commence life in regions remote from the place where they had been accustomed to commune with God.

The Israelites had carried this devotion to a consecrated place to an extreme, and it had become the sum and substance of their faith. They had Bethel, Gilgal, Beersheba. The ritualistic service and sacrifices at these shrines had become the essence of religion, the sustaining and honoring of them the fulfilment of religious duty, and altars heaped high with sacrifices and hidden in clouds of incense were supposed to be a delight and complete satisfaction to Jehovah. Religion, from Alpha to Omega, might be fulfilled within these precincts. The gold on the altar more than the altar; the altar more than the temple; the temple more than the place; and the place more than the Lord himself. It was the subtlest form of idolatry.

Fearless of the fury aroused by such seeming sacrilege, Amos strikes at these sacred places, even foretelling their desolation. He shows that religion is more than ritual, faith more than form, righteousness more than smoking sacrifices, and that divine favor cannot be purchased by devotion to any place on earth. He seeks to turn them from the seen to the unseen, from altar worship to God worship. He strikes the note which is dominant in those words spoken by Christ, not many miles from this spot:— "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

With this challenge and casting out of the locality, comes also a positive note as foreign to their notions and as

repugnant. The current ideas of those times did not associate God intimately with persons as it did with places. Little did they realize that God's poor as well as his temples might be so sacred in his eyes that neglect of them aroused his wrath: that food in the mouths of his hungry children satisfied him better than flesh in the sacrificial flame; that clothes for the naked were more precious to his heart than ecclesiastical vestments of purple and fine twined linen; that justice to the oppressed was more radiant than altar embers, and mercy more fragrant than incense. Their creed was that God would best be propitiated by altar ceremony, and that his favor was not affected by their treatment of their fellow men. As clear and as swift and as destructive as a thunderbolt came Amos' message from God smiting this conception. Nothing done at sacred places could atone for the wrongs done to God's people. In the divine vocabulary "mine" comes before "me," and "my people" before "my places." Amos is the forerunner of Christ in his words "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." And we know that the supreme revelation of God was made in a person, and not in a place: that to-day he is revealed in men and women and children more than he is in buildings and altars and shrines; and that our devotion to his children is a quick way to divine favor.

The form as well as the contents of Amos' iconoclastic utterances aroused hostility. Not by the winsome words of captivating eloquence, nor by tender appeals, nor by the dispassionate presentation of fundamental truths, but by intense and dramatic rebuke, by accusation and denunciation did he seek to reform them. Not as the dewdrop, or the gentle rain, or the gliding river, but as a leaping torrent, rushing impetuously forward, and hurling itself at every resisting object in its path, came the prophet

Amos. There is appeal and promise, but it is mainly rebuke of the severest kind, permeated by the spirit which Christ occasionally manifested, as in the cleansing of the temple and the denunciation of the Pharisees. That nothing else would have made an impression on that age may be assumed, but it fairly raises for us the question as to the value of the rebuke as an instrument for righteousness in these days. From pulpit speech and teachers' exhortations and private counsel the rebuke has largely disappeared. Why is it? Because we lack the courage of Amos, or because wisdom convinces us that the spirit of this age would utterly reject it and respond with a resentment which would make the last state of the sinner worse than the first?

Without doubt denunciatory rebuke, in these days, with rare exceptions, is foolish and futile, relieving the speaker's wrath, but only irritating or antagonizing the wanderer. At times it is necessary, but ordinarily it is barren, and, like the desert, the hotter it is the more barren it is.

There are, however, other forms of rebuke that are more telling; those ordinarily used by Christ. The disciples disputed who among them was the greatest, and Christ rebuked them by a single act, taking the lowest position in washing their feet; they forbade the children's presence, and he rebuked them by bestowing on the little ones the tenderest and richest expression of affection of his life; Judas condemned the anointing Mary, and Christ rebuked him by conferring immortality on the deed; Peter denied him, and Christ rebuked him first with a look and later with the threefold lover's question; Thomas doubted him, and Christ rebuked him by bidding him apply the test he had chosen. Rebuke we should, far more than we do, following in the main Christ's indirect method, relying more on example than passionate protest, on suggestion rather than denunciation, making it inspirational rather than damnatory.

The swift and happy performance of a deed chides the idler, often spurring him to action; silence shames the calumniator; a look withers the liar; a gift condemns the greedy; a soft answer turns away wrath. May we have the fearless fervor in denunciation of Amos, if that should be needed; but may we also possess the wisdom, tact and grace to rebuke so that we shall win and not repel from the right way!

Edwin H. Byington.

FOURTH QUARTER

ELISHA SUCCEEDS ELIJAH

2 KINGS 2: 12-22

"And Elisha saw it," etc.

The ordinary ceremonies of induction to office are wanting in this record of the elevation of Elisha. But we really have here the story of a confirmation service. There was no temple but the sky, no choir save that of the upper stalls. The vestments were simple,—a single well-worn mantle. Even the water of the Jordan which was flowing hard by was not used in tactual consecration. Yet here one was set apart as a prophet of Jehovah in the ancient apostolic line. We notice in the first place concerning this candidate for the holy order,

I. *Elisha was a faithful follower and watcher of Elijah.* He had refused to be separated from his chief. Probably in the years during which they had been together a strong attachment had grown up between the two. The younger was called to the side of the elder at a time of the latter's discouragement. Doubtless he knew the story of the awful depression which had preceded his apprenticeship to the great prophet. It was part of his own mission not only to learn to preach but to minister to his master. In God's mercy he had been appointed not simply to succeed but to be a companion to the noble servant of God. Elijah was not displaced at once,—and when he was it was a promotion—but he was given one who should be a comfort to him.

There was a gracious human relationship between these two noble spirits. In part this may have accounted for Elisha's refusal to leave Elijah alone in these last hours. He thought he might be needed. Perhaps the light of the elder prophet's soul grew dim at times, and the younger cheered and revived his faith. That some crisis was impending there could be no doubt, but what it was could not be foretold. So the apprentice prophet kept near his leader, perhaps with the thought of attending him in case of death or a moment of gloom or a stroke of sickness. He was like a devoted son or daughter to an aged or infirm parent, standing ready to assist without controlling his movements. He would give his arm to the venerable figure and friend if it were needed.

That Elisha's services were not required, does not militate against the generous purpose of the assistant. Other aids came from above, and Elijah was borne in a heavenly chariot and no longer would he lean upon a human hand or staff. He was going to ride now. He had once beaten out the royal charioteers in the race from Carmel to Jezreel; but his course was over, and the weary limbs rested on the footstool of the coach of the ambassadors, and his head in Abraham's bosom.

There was a motive of affection which led to this refusal of Elisha's to depart from his master. Like Ruth to Naomi he had said thrice, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." The promise of a double portion of Elijah's spirit was made no doubt in part because of these tender personal ties.

But there was something more than faithful following which secured the reward in this case. The young man did not let his prizes fail because of carelessness or inattention. "And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" Good purposes are not sufficient in the world or in spiritual

things to secure the greatest ends. We have got to plan for them. If affection could have gained the blessing, Elisha deserved it on that condition; but neither father nor prophet can give his son his spirit without some earnest token beyond love. This world is geared for those who reach for its prizes and wrestle with its combinations. How many young people fail to gain the upper levels because they take it for granted that this is an easier earth to get on in than it was in the elder days, and they do not exercise the climbing faculty!

In our relations to God and man we have got to take precautions against failure, as Jacob did when he wanted to secure his brother's forgiveness. He laid out a regular campaign of reconciliation. Drove succeeded drove of gifts, and each leader spoke gracious words, so that by the time Jacob came up his brother had been fairly captured by the kindly treatment. Jacob did not simply send a note expressing sorrow. Nor can we in our day get the good we ought to have unless we watch for the great conjunctions which occur in the planets and are ready to take advantage of them. Christ tried to get the disciples around to that temper in Gethsemane, "Watch!"

But they did not learn the lesson of pressing hard for the kingdom till a later day. Elisha not only kept around faithfully with his master, but he caught hold of the great occasions of privilege and rightly attained his own elevation. He did not intrigue against his predecessor, but he was ready for the difficult succession when it came. He seized opportunities in his profession as well as learned from his superior. He looked up and around as well as strove to imitate his teacher. Inspiration he sought from the sky, and he kept his watch there. When his master was taken he saw it and cried out and claimed the blessing. He put in his application for the lofty place, and did not keep silent. His whole conduct showed not only personal

affection but great earnestness as to his career and it was not left in any detail to chance. He followed his master for years, then followed him up to the sky.

II. *Elisha secured a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.* Doubtless Elisha would have received from his aged master some sign of favor in any event, but his desire went beyond this. He had seen the success and influence of his chief and felt the privilege of a life which was under the continual spell of the heavenly powers. The tales of the early deeds of the great prophet would thrill his disciple, and the companionship of the noble character even with its moods of weakness and depression would stimulate the holy ambitions of the pupil. What Elisha asked for when he sought a double portion of the spirit of Elijah was really the blessing of the first born (Deut. 21 : 17). He wanted to be the full heir of his great father and have all the favor which his relationship would allow. He would be as the son of this spiritual sire. He was like Timothy to Paul. As a young man Elisha had left his father's house at God's call, and now he wanted to be included with the royal line of the men of God. The double portion of the spirit which he desired was the birthright of one who was fully given over to the service and family of the Most High.

The significance of this request of Elisha's is seen when we remember the conditions of his call to the prophet's apprenticeship. He was a farmer boy, and at work plowing in the field with a company of husbandmen. There were at least twelve yoke of oxen that were employed on the ancestral plantation; so there was prosperity and abundance. The young man had a good home, for he asked to go and kiss his father and mother. There was something to leave, a worthy inheritance for the times. But Elisha felt he had gone to say farewell to his parents, so he broke up his plows for firewood, sacrificed his oxen and made a feast for the people. He burned his cattle behind him and

made a thorough surrender of his estate. He responded as did James and John to the call of Christ. They left their father, Zebedee, and the boats and nets to go after the Nazarene. It was this hearty cutting off from the old and thorough attachment to the new life which marked the desire of this early disciple to be incorporated into the noble succession of the servants of God.

It was not the mantle which this candidate for holy orders sought. He did not ask for rite or vestment, but for a divine investiture with heavenly offices and honors. He picked up the ancient robe of his master and smote the Jordan waters as the elder prophet had done, but we hear of no music of the choir or costume and symbol or ceremony. The man's consecration had gone deeper than this regard for externals. He rent his own clothes as a sign of his own deep sorrow at the loss of his leader, and he called, "My father, my father." He showed thus that it was as a son he wished to inherit from the elder prophet and to have God's great favor in full measure. Elijah's prayer for this boon was what was desired and secured, the double portion of the spirit of power and service.

III. *The students search for the old prophet.*

At first the sons of the prophets in the school at Jericho accepted the testimony of their senses, when Elisha divided the Jordan waters, and said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." But the academic air, as often since, was conservative and skeptical, and there was a demand for the old-time teacher. Perhaps these scholastics had known the apprentice of the great prophet and rejected him because he had not studied in their school, had come from the plow and had not had a thorough theological education. Then he dressed differently and wore his hair shorter than the venerable figure that had been among them. Possibly it was the younger members of the household of these priests who later jeered at the newly installed prophet, and

cried, "Go up, thou bald head." The schoolmen were not ready to believe in the translation of Elijah because they did not want to receive Elisha. They stultified their minds by refusing to accept a new spiritual truth and the tidings of a wonderful transaction because they were unwilling to accept this successor. Thus does prejudice against a man keep us from the living realities of God's fresh revelations.

Search parties of strong men, the athletes in a band of fifty, scoured the mountains and valleys in vain quest for one whom they themselves had known was to be taken away. Had not they told Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" Possibly they were angry because they were not invited to witness the great apotheosis. Anyhow, they seem to have been a dull, antediluvian company, if not actually profane. We have here a dead conservatism which recognizes the letter and form and refuses the spirit which gives life. The fifty sons of the prophets were no match for the plowman's son in his deep consecration and spiritual eagerness. These pedants stood afar off when the great transaction occurred and had not followed closely, so they could not be sure of the heavenly transfer, as they had only seen it from a distance; but Elisha had followed and watched.

Beside this prejudice of the schools against the young spiritual evangelist was the desire, no doubt, for the old leader. The lectures of this rugged character in the seminary at Jericho would be popular with the students and draw from the city itself. There was a picturesqueness and vigor which the scholars thought they were going to miss in the new prophet and so they went searching for the old one.

There is often a lack of fairness in our attitude to the new minister or teacher who is to take up the tasks that others have laid down because of death or for other good

reasons. A popular pastor has accepted a call to a larger field. Somebody else is chosen to the vacant place. Yet the people will keep running after the former leader in a way which harms the work of the kingdom of God, and hurts his successor, if it does not finally wreck the church. Give to the new minister a fair opportunity. The elder has had his chance, and the other man should have his. Sometimes the young refuse to be pleased with a fresh teacher and go into another class when the former instructor has retired. This often hinders the progress of the Sunday-school, throws the scholars out of the track of the best improvement, and sometimes causes their loss entirely to the school. It is a sign of good breeding as well as grace to welcome heartily and to help those who come to serve us as the successors of great leaders. Some of this adoration of the old pastor gets pretty near idolatry, and too frequent memorial services, and gifts of portraits, will work mischief to themselves and the membership.

IV. *Elisha went ahead to prove his calling in a practical way.*

The students and faculty of Jericho seminary for awhile did not acknowledge the commission of Elisha. Three days they wasted wandering over hills and valleys with only a humiliating result. But before long an opportunity came for the later prophet to demonstrate his mission. The waters of the city were bitter and their overflow injured the soil and crops. Perhaps the springs were like the Dead Sea which is not far off. Elisha showed he understood the trouble and called for salt in a new cruse, and poured the contents into the fountains. There to this day flows the most magnificent stream in all that region, and the land is rich and harvests bountiful wherever it spreads.

A prayer of faith with the purpose to serve his countrymen brought the blessing to the community and set at rest all contentions as to his claim to be a prophet of the Lord.

When we cannot at first get the people to accept our credentials as spiritual leaders, we can sooner or later find opportunity to prove our calling by some genuine neighborly or friendly service. In these days when men challenge the pulpit's utterances, the true pastor finds a way to introduce the truth by his loving kindness to those who are in trouble. There are many certificates of a ministry now besides sermonic eloquence. In the sick-room or with the dying, pleading with the wayward, steadying the tempted, by parish patriotism and love of children one may seal his spiritual licensure which is at first questioned by council of the churches or a captious community.

William Rogers Campbell.

THE WIDOW'S OIL INCREASED

2 Kings 4: 1-7

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."— Ps. 37: 3.

One of the observed fruits of the historical study of the Bible is the spirit of discrimination. It is believed that loyalty is not imperiled by most searching and painstaking investigation, and that the foundations are not destroyed even if the superstructure be remodeled. It no longer militates against the idea of the inspiration of the Bible, that all portions of it are not of equal inspirational value. One may be staunchly persuaded of the fact of miracle recorded in the Word of God, while questioning the miraculous character of certain incidents which have been in other ages regarded as such.

It does not detract from the supremacy of Elisha's character or the dignity of his mission, to regard this story of his wonder-working power, not as a miracle, but as an instance of folk-lore, which grew about his character in the three hundred years which intervened between his death and the writing of this book of Kings. The significance of the story does not reside in the oil supply, whether that be fact or fiction, but rather in the response of a man busily occupied with great concerns, to the spirit of comradeship in humble but honorable need.

A prophet, a minister, has entered into his reward, and the poverty which by the adroit and economical disposition of his slender income he has been able to keep in a

refined and self-respecting obscurity, is now with a kind of brutal publicity exposed to vulgar vision. His loyalty to his work has impelled him not only to invest his little all, but to mortgage his future. He is taken before the debt is discharged, and added to his widow's grief is the poignant anguish of the fear that her sons must be sold into the heartless slavery of the Shylock, who would satisfy his claim by owning and disposing of them. The widow piteously appeals to Elisha, who defends her interests, defeats the purpose of the Shylock, and delivers the boys.

That is the simple story. What of it?

The dead man was a minister. Did it pay? or does it?

At present, the ministry is devoid of special attraction. The ranks are not being filled with the flower of the land. The brains of the country are being drawn into the commercial maelstrom; even the professions of journalism, medicine, law are so evidently commercialized that it is a question whether they are not essentially money-making institutions. Nor is the ministry entirely exempt. It has been proposed to form a ministers' union, which shall regulate the salaries the clergy shall receive, and also the length of the sermon they shall preach! It is believed that the churches will manifest a livelier approval of the united effort to make the sermons short than to make the salaries sufficient.

If the ministry is to be put on a cash basis, there is room for argument. A minister spends ten years preparing for his profession. His salary in Congregationalism, is, upon the average, $1,000; in the country at large, about $600. He is relatively the poorest paid man in the community.

If he has a large salary, he is confronted with the anomalous situation that his necessary expenses increase in inverse ratio to the size of his salary. In the great churches of New York City a few years ago, it was found that there were but

two ministers who were supporting themselves from their salaries. The ministers in the largest churches are poorest of all, unless by some good fortune they can command a modest patrimony.

More than this, the ministry has specific disadvantages. There is a great deal that is petty, small, irritating, disagreeable. It is not pleasant to assert one's self in opposition to good men: to announce truth which will surely be unwelcome to those who are living in the twilight; to stand quite in advance of the general ideas, isolated; to feel that one's relatives are not quite reconciled to one's life choice. One gains his recognition as a man somewhat tardily if he is known to be a minister.

There is a great deal that is suffering, pure and simple. Once in a while a man whines, but ordinarily when a minister suffers most deeply, his congregation is as ignorant of it as they are of the text of his last Sunday's sermon.

"History has not a place in the margin, even," said Dr. Channing, "for the minister and the school-mistress."

If it is a question of mere pay, surely dreary wages are the preacher's; all the more dreary because of the consciousness a minister has that his qualities of utterance, of brain power, of address, of persuasion, have a market value far in excess of their returns in the ministry. But on the other hand, if there is anything above *pay* in the world; if the light of the world is not the glint and gleam of the almighty dollar; if it is any comfort not to be for sale; *if just to help* a man is a deeper satisfaction than financially to "hold him up"; if to speak a truth, if to quicken the influences which make great commonwealths and save them, if to help make a finer public spirit, a better social order; if to advise souls in the Valley of Decision, to comfort them in quick sorrow, to cheer them in sickness; if to found and foster institutions of learning; if to live for the public good;

if to make ideals real; if to be a special partner with God in enlisting men in his great enterprise; if all this privilege be better than *pay*, then the ministry has not lost its attraction. Indeed, it is beginning to-day to show a *new* attraction, and men are coming to see with the modern eye, that it is better to be a minister, even if the creditor does come! Oh, take your pay, you that are working for it, to whom it is no more than meat and body and raiment. Take it, make the most of it. You are welcome to it! As for those of us who choose the ministry, not till Crœsus shall outshine Christ, or capital eclipse the cross, can you secure the verdict you desire in the supreme court of the soul's ideals.

But however much a minister may glory in his service, his sacrifices must be shared by his family.

This woman is indeed in a pitiable place. Suppose you asked her, "Do you wish your husband had not been a minister? It's so hard!" She would have looked at you with all the scorn of her soul. Not only to her own life, but to the life of those boys had come advantages which even this great impending trouble could not offset. What was her trial? Not that her boys should work, but that they should work under such conditions as to deprive them of those very priceless possessions which had come to them from the sacrificial ministry to which the father had given his life.

The problem of child labor is a modern Colossus; comparatively few people realize either its extent or its serious import. Thousands of children under twelve years of age are working in America every night. While gentle, pious mothers are listening to their favored children's evening prayer, other mothers, impelled by necessity or by greed of gain, are driving their children to work. "Shadows of the evening, steal across the sky," and white-robed innocence sings:—

"Through the long night watches,
May thine angels spread
Their white wings above me,
Watching round my bed."

Meantime, other children in working clothes are passing factory gates to employ those long night watches in work so hard, so cruel, so pitiless, that no one even dares to sing:

"Grant to little children
Visions bright of thee."

The horror of such night scenes is multiplied by day. It is true that the spur of want and need many times drives mere babes to work. But it is also true that other influences conspire to rob these boys and girls of a fair chance in life. School-teachers and factory inspectors can give multitudinous illustrations of the diverse ways in which, by false statements and cunning evasions of law, the school is robbed of its brightest scholars. Philanthropists can afford luminous testimony of the harm done by an obtuse and indifferent public spirit in this regard.

Miss Addams, of Hull House, Chicago, furnishes a typical example. A little fellow, eight years of age, boards a car to sell his evening papers, using, as his leader, the last murder. A business man, attracted by the energy of the tiny scrap, buys a paper to encourage the prophetic little merchant; a philanthropic, tender-hearted woman is sorry for the newsboy, wonders why he is not in school, and resolves to bring the matter to the attention of the club; a labor leader who knows so well what it all means for that child, clenches his fist and swears a new allegiance to the agitation against child labor!

What does child labor mean? It means robbing manhood and womanhood by sapping the physical springs of life; it means cheating the mind by denying it at the

critical time the education which the public schools provide; it means debasing the soul by casting it, immature and untrained, into the current of sordid, squalid life; just at the hour when the child needs its home with every gracious character-forming influence, it is thrust out defenseless and disregarded into the conscienceless world, and under the most unfavorable conditions is left to the tender mercies of the law of survival; it means prostituting the citizenship of to-morrow to the greedy, short-sighted, nefarious money passion of to-day. The mother who has any conception of what it means thus to dwarf a child physically, mentally and morally, will witness with unspeakable dread and with every possible resistance the substitution of the clay idols of the world in place of the living inspirations of the home, while those who are blind to the terrific results of this inhuman procedure, should be protected from the consequences to their own children of their folly, by the most insistent and most thoroughly enforced laws. One patent way to save America is to save the children.

Edward Everett Hale, in writing of Emerson, the idealist, declares his great outstanding commendation and quality to be that he "never turns his back on daily life or its petty demands." A similar comment is made upon the great Elisha in the remark that "while Elisha's career is less impressive than that of Elijah, his achievment is to make a common life illustrious." Elisha was a man of affairs whose society was courted by princes, and whose judgment was invited by kings. The great responsibilities were forever knocking at his door, and the large opportunities were being placed at his disposal, but still he discerned the sparsely recognized truth that the most precious goods of life are often times wrapped in the small packages. His fine discrimination is in play in this incident, which recounts the response of a busy man to a humble appeal. The

widow's necessity was to the great Elisha, not the plea of charity, but the demand of justice.

Men and women who live for the public good have, in case necessity compels it, a claim of justice upon the comradeship of those who either share or sympathize with the aims and ideals for which they have sacrificed their all.

Ministerial aid needs to be taken from the list of charities and put into the list of obligations. Too many saints of God who have dared to be poor that they might assist in bringing in the kingdom, are either left to make the best terms they can with their extreme necessity, or are made to feel like paupers when a pittance is grudgingly doled out to them. A man has a right to be poor, as a reward for Christian service; there is a special beatitude for him. He has also a right to the intrusted comradeship of Elisha the favored, the prosperous, the strong.

But together with the sense of justice which Elisha was discriminating enough to acknowledge, there was the value of the boys themselves. To save them to the noble family ideals and to make possible for them "tall, erect, sun crowned" manhood, was a chance which even Elisha did not fail to covet.

If life is determined by the "range of one's interests" a great multitude are only half alive. In spite of the call to "lift up your eyes," which comes with strident resonance from all departments of the world life, it is yet pathetically true that the temptation grows to become the victim of the profession, business or circumstance which makes the paramount claim. Perhaps a great and worthy ministry of the growing passion for outdoor life and sport, will be to break the chain which binds so many to the treadmill. Elisha found a new interest in these boys; he did not regard attention to their interests as detracting from his own busy life, and who will doubt that through his interest

in them, he himself took many a refreshing draught at the fountain of youth?

There is a reciprocal value to interest the sympathy which brings back to the giver more than it can ever take away. Elisha was a greater, a more efficient and a mightier man because of his interest in these fatherless boys. Who knows after all but that caring for them was his greatest achievement and his most enduring memorial?

A final lesson, plain, homely, familiar, but forever true from this incident of satisfied need is that the Lord will provide. The righteous are not forsaken and his seed do not beg bread. Those who do God's work can preeminently trust his providing care, for "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." The minister, the widow, the boys, all are beneath his watchful eye, and he knows how to send his busy Elishas upon those errands of interest and sympathy, which, while relieving the distress of his saints, do not fail to requite with blessing and with benediction, the alert, discriminating and loyal Elisha himself.

Nehemiah Boynton.

ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE

2 Kings 4: 25-37

"So she went and came unto the man of God," etc.

In reading this Old Testament story, many queries arise which no one can satisfactorily answer. Here is no place for dogmatic assertion. Certain impressions are likely to be made by it in which most would be agreed.

I. *The popular confidence in a worthy character.*

There was something about the bearing and conversation of Elisha, which convinced the chance acquaintance, even, that he had a sacred mission. Any traveler expected hospitality as he passed from village to village, or at the tent of the herdman. One in the dress of the religious devotee was specially welcome. At the house of a prominent Shunammite, the prophet's visits were so acceptable, that a particular room was prepared for his occasional coming. His presence there was a benediction.

The trials and joys of that family were known to and shared by him. To have such relationship, because the subject of it is thought to be "walking with God," is a very great honor. This is a tribute to the belief, well-nigh universal, that there is such a thing as sincerity and disinterested desire to aid others. The treacheries and betrayals of the ages have not destroyed this faith, which springs ever anew, as the green blade where the fires have burned over the ground.

That it is which sustains the office of the minister. He is supposed to come nearer to the real necessities of the

person than any other, since he is a divinely chosen agent to serve all. Because of his studies and hours of waiting upon God, he is believed to be better able than others to understand and appreciate the unspoken longings and fears which constitute so much of every life. He is the confidant of secrets which must be breathed into some other ear, lest their burden crush the bearer. He is a "father confessor," indeed. If he be true to what is expected of him, no station has in it so great possibilities of blessing. To bring in cheer where gloom has reigned, and freedom where hard circumstance has restrained, and knowledge where distressful ignorance has oppressed, is such a deliverance as lifts the author out of the common ranks and idealizes him. At any rate, it establishes the conviction that the things of the spirit are supreme, and he who represents them stands for the best that is known among men. If there is a celestial fruit which matures amid earthly surroundings, this of divine ministry is such. Many who wear no ecclesiastical title are rich purveyors of it. Clergyman or layman, obedient to the holy prompting, may attain to both the dignity and the duty, which the saintly George Herbert defined, "The dignity in that a priest *may* do that which Christ did, and by his authority and as his vicegerent: the duty, in that a priest *is* to do that which Christ did, and after his manner, both for doctrine and life."

This incident still further discloses

II. *The conviction of God's care for the sorrow of the individual.*

A mother's heart is suddenly and overwhelmingly plunged into grief. Her only child is dead. She hardly thinks of entreating the Lord to give him back. Perhaps she has never heard that such a thing has ever occurred. But to his prophet she flies, to tell him of her overwhelming calamity. Perhaps he could reach that ear which listens

to and that hand which saves the afflicted. Back of all her haste, urging her on and framing her message, was the conviction that the Infinite—once he were apprised of her need—would have sympathy and give her complete relief. All any mortal might be expected to do, would be to say some comforting, restraining word and offer assistance in the last sad rites.

While the aid and the plea of the "man of God" were sought, most naturally, it was with the secret assurance that Jehovah's feeling toward her would be that of pity—that his word, as it trembled on the lips of his servant, would soothe her stricken spirit.

This profound witness to the divine character is far more deeply imprinted on the heart than many allow. They who try to persuade us that the "heaven is as brass over our heads, and the earth as iron under us," argue against an intuition of a personal and affectionate Father and Lord, which survives, in spite of all that is distressing.

Humanity, in the mass, does not answer for the individual. Each must voice his own entreaty, with firm trust that he is of as much concern to the One who gave him being, as the whole are. At times, our separate worth and needs seem to exceed that of all others. Sage and Psalmist presume on and assert this truth, in the hours when it is most obscured. The particularity of woe implies the special regard of Him who allows it. It did not matter that other thousands were caught in the fiery horrors of the volcano. Each terrified soul cried to the Ruler of senseless forces to save *him*. His call was to One who knows and feels and responds. Such voices will not be hushed while there are any to suffer, nor will the conviction cease that a compassionate Lord is on the throne of the universe. Calamity is a stern corrector of a false philosophy. They will always be appearing, who will exclaim, "From the end

of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed."

Another fact well shown in this story is

III. *The impossibility of delegating virtue.*

Gehazi, the covetous, tricky servant, is immediately dispatched to the house of the bereaved mother bearing the prophet's staff, with the instruction to lay it upon the face of the dead child. Here we come upon the common belief in necromancy. The wand of the juggler and the scepter of the monarch rank with the staff of the religious leader. Symbol indeed it was, and regarded with awe, as wielded by Moses and Aaron and borne by the servant of Jehovah. Its solemn lifting might mean a blessing or a curse upon friend or foe. By it the unseen powers were summoned, and did their saving or destructive work. Why should it not be effective in breaking the grasp in which death held its victim? With that expectation the wily youth sped on his way. He laid the staff upon the rigid, cold face. There was no flutter of muscle, no stir of vital currents in the veins, no flush of returning life in those features from which it had so recently fled. The universal enemy was secure in his remorseless hold upon this once active, wonderful mechanism—a human body. The acts of the conjurer he calmly defied. No stick ever grown could wrest his captive and bring it back into the world of warmth and light and action. He did not need to fear the pass or spell the prophet's badge of office might cast upon any. Reality and not fancy, fact and not dream ruled in the natural world. The dead waked not out of their sleep. Whatever wonders the master might be able to perform, this his servant could not possess himself of the secret. The subtle control of occult powers was not transferable. Ability lies not in the instrument he wields but in the person. Scanderbeg's arm and prowess were essential to the victories of his sword. Thomas Arnold's genius, mental

acuteness and moral sensitiveness could not be bequeathed to his successors at Rugby, nor Whitefield's voice and fire and perception of the gospel message to any preacher, nor the great Austrian physician's discernment and dexterity to any surgeon.

Would that the devout father and mother might endow the graceless child with their own religious affection! But no Bible hid in the trunk of the wayward son is such a talisman as to keep him in the paths of righteousness and make his career noble. He can never, in the crucial hour, rely on a piety which any other soul than his own has attained. Discomfited and discarded, he comes to see how worthless is a rod and staff on which the parents leaned, walking through the valley of humiliation, but which he has never learned to use or trust. There is many a Gehazi going out to conspicuous defeat because he supposes he carries the charm which wins success, where his own evil heart has already made it impossible. It is to him, like the Israelite ark, captured and borne off into the Philistine country, an uncomfortable, a dangerous trophy.

Here too we have a vivid illustration of the familiar truth that

IV. *Prayer and effort should coexist.*

The Shunammite woman was right. The helper she sought did have close alliance with the Lord of all lives, and she would not be denied. He had to hurry back with her, on the momentous errand of rescue. The silent form, lying in that hallowed chamber and already yielding to the elements of decay, beckoned them on and gave wings to their feet.

Entering the sacred presence, it was for the servant of the Most High to be alone with the dead. First came that pouring out of the heart before Him "who killeth, and maketh alive." What wrestlings, like that of Luther for the sparing of Melancthon, like that of Knox for his

native land, like that of multitudes since, there were in that closed room, none can tell! But this casting of self on the mercy of Jehovah—this confession of utter helplessness, yet of intense desire, prepared the way for the exercise of such skill as one trained in the medical schools of his time might acquire.

Bending every faculty to this one great end, availing himself of every resource he knew, in an abandon of emotion he almost *compelled* the released spirit to come back to its fleshly shrine. As they who resuscitate the drowned cease not till the faint breath again gives its sign, so this earlier restorer watched, and labored and listened, and, at last, a slight tremor spread through the motionless frame. Soon the darling boy was in his mother's arms again, returned from the land of shades, as though he had only journeyed from her for a little.

The rapture in that home who could describe! The wonderful author of it all—so far as mortals could discern—had passed through a season of complete self-surrender, yet complete taxing of every power for such result.

Is it so, that the recovery we seek, of them who are holden in the death of sin, waits on just such agonizing inventiveness and stress of love? It is not by easy processes and listless petitions and indifferent ministries that the hard seal of bad habit is broken. Neither is it by novel appliances, and self-acting machinery, and much talking that the heavy sleep of worldliness is disturbed. To spend days and nights on one's knees in prayer for the salvation of another's soul is vain, if it leads not to the devising of some special means for influencing it. The soporific of evil is too strong and withstands the combined attack of heartless entreaty and careless scheming. The church or the individual Christian who would like to have the kingdom of heaven come, and men and women living the saintly life about them, yet which neither prays nor toils

for it, has only to see the multitudes unchanged. To resort to either agency alone, is to accomplish little. Both are essential to a resurrection of the soul. Repeatedly, since that event at Shunem, the son, as dead to all goodness as the patron of the opium den is to the glory of the sunlight, has been brought out of his stupor and given back to her who bore him, in all the charm and freshness of a son of God.

The method remains the same from Elisha's day to ours. It is as potent now as then. The miracle in the one case is not greater than in the other.

DeWitt S. Clark.

ELISHA AND NAAMAN

2 KINGS 5: 1-14

"Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given victory unto Syria," etc.

Elisha is one of the most interesting of the Old Testament prophets. His career, as sketched in the books of the Kings, is marked by the most extraordinary incidents. Its interest is not confined to these incidents alone, romantic as they are; it borrows additional force from his relation as a disciple to Elijah, and from the remarkable contrast between him and his master. Were there ever persons so closely associated that bore to each other so little resemblance? Elijah, solitary, austere, God-fearing and courageous for the truth, but fearless of men, was a type of the uncompromising reformer and religious Puritan. Elisha, on the other hand, sociable and gracious, abounding in deeds of helpfulness and beneficence, is a better type of the genial, lovable Christian. While Elijah is a rarer and grander figure, and more fit, perhaps, to do the work of God in critical times, Elisha, more like common men in his love of society and neighborly kindness, is better fitted to carry on the work thus begun by Elijah. If we wonder that the stern master did not leave more of his impress upon the softer-hearted, flexible disciple, so that the character of one can be clearly discerned reflected in the other, we may remind ourselves that such strongly contrasted natures are often intimately asso-

ciated. Those who might be thought so unlike as to be mutually repellent are found in actual life, like the positive and negative electricities, powerfully drawn to each other and harmoniously united in wedlock, friendship and business. In the case of Elijah and Elisha the association was doubtless not accidental but providential. As Dean Stanley says, "What was begun in fire and storm, in solitude and awful visions, must be carried on through winning arts and healing acts and gentle words of peaceful and social intercourse. . . . No chariots of fire . . . bear away his soul to heaven. Yet he knows that though unseen they are always around him. 'Behold, the mountain [at Dothan] was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.' It is a vision of which the meaning acquires double force from its connection with the actual history; as if to show, by the very same figure, that the hope which bore Elijah to his triumphal end was equally present with Elisha." This "hope" was that God would clearly show himself the ruler of the world, in whose protection his servants were safe, and their acts done at his bidding sure of fulfilling his divine purpose.

In the story of Naaman's cure, *this truth of God's sovereignty in human affairs* is clearly and strikingly illustrated.

I. *It is shown in the intimation given that the greatness and distinction of men are due to God's use of them as instruments to accomplish his divine purpose in the world.*

This truth is not merely intimated here, it is explicitly declared: "Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, *because by him the Lord had given victory unto Syria.*" It is a truth plainly written and often repeated in the Scriptures. In his providential leading of his chosen people, from first to last, God appears to have endeavored in various ways to impress it indelibly upon their minds. He taught it to them

in the stories of their patriarchal ancestors, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph; in the traditions of Moses, Joshua and David; in the histories of the exodus, the conquest of Palestine, and the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. By the mouths of psalmists and prophets, also, as well as by their sacred histories, the solemn lesson was reiterated and reaffirmed. The Israelites were taught it by their victories and their defeats. Their victories were gained by God's providential favor rather than won by the strength and valor of their armies, or the skill of their military leaders: their defeats were due to his chastisements for their sins and his desire to bring them to repentance, rather than to the superior forces and leadership of their enemies. "Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle," says the Psalmist: "thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also made mine enemies turn their backs unto me" (Ps. 18: 39, 40).

But the Lord hides his hand in the doing of this work, and so men fondly imagine that their successes and achievements and consequent exaltation are due to themselves alone. Thus did Nebuchadnezzer when he said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan. 4: 30). Soon or late, however, their eyes are likely to be opened to the truth, as were Nebuchadnezzer's through the discipline of adversity. With his clarified vision the humbled king then said of God's sovereign might: "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4: 35).

Other benefits besides humility come from such a revelation, the benefits of a new faith, hope, joy, spiritual strength. The course of things is not like that of a railroad train drawn by a runaway locomotive, with no en-

gineer, or a furious lunatic to guide it. God's hand holds the lever; the world and all its interests are in his keeping. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice." The *immanency* of God in human society and in history, as well as in the material universe, and the reality of his presence and watchful providence are not delusive figments of religious superstition, but wholesome, vital truths good for the heart to rest upon. What is so good for us cannot speak us false. We do well by every means to strengthen and confirm our faith in them.

> "This firm faith never to forego,
> Despite of all that seems at strife
> With blessing and with curses rife,
> . . . this is blessing, this is life."

II. *The greatest are subject to humiliating and disabling limitations, which, except God relieve and help them, are sufficient to frustrate their ambitions and defeat their desires.*

Naaman possessed nearly every requisite to worldly success and the full gratification of the highest ambition. He had the genius of a great commander; under his leadership the armies of Syria had won great victories. Besides this gift of leadership, he had the personal courage and the heroic daring of a popular hero admired and extolled as "a mighty man of valor." Because of his great services to the state and his personal attractiveness he enjoyed to an unusual degree the favor and confidence of his king. On public occasions, as when the king visited, for worship, the temple of his god Rimmon, it was on Naaman's arm that he leaned. The king loved his companionship and lavished upon him the rich gifts and great offices monarchs confer upon their favorites. Such eminence was his, with the prospect of still greater elevation, when a crushing calamity fell upon him—he became a leper.

How long he had been a leper when introduced to our

notice we do not know. Probably it was a recent affliction, and the discovery of it a recent discovery, which had filled him and his house with distress and dismay. The loathsome disease made any one afflicted with it an outcast. It doomed him to a rigid separation from the rest of mankind. Men shunned his presence and touch as a horrible contagion. It exiled him from the privileges of court and sanctuary and high office. It brought a sudden blight upon all of Naaman's honors. It was like the blight of death,—a slow, protracted death,—whose effect however was immediate, as soon as his disease became generally known.

We can scarcely imagine the greatness of his calamity,—the anguish that overwhelmed his proud spirit—the sorrow that pervaded his house. "The basest slave in Syria," says Bishop Hall, "would not change skins with him, if he might have his honor to boot. Thus hath the wise God thought meet to sauce the valor, dignity, renown, victories of the famous general of the Syrians." No wonder that the little Hebrew slave girl, who attended upon his wife, was touched with pity, and, remembering the miraculous power of the great prophet of her country, said to her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria!" It was a bitter ingredient in the sufferer's anguish that the disease was deemed a plague, or special judgment of heaven upon him; that the shadow which darkened his life was cast by God's frown.

Whether a judgment of God or not, the disease was incurable by any skill or power of man. The exclamation of the king of Israel when he read the letter of the king of Syria requesting him to heal Naaman, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" was in harmony with common belief and human experience. This disease could be recovered from only by a miracle wrought by the mighty

power of God. Elisha had performed such miracles, the fame of which was noised all over Israel.

That the king of Israel did not think of this, and avail himself of the prophet's aid to gratify the Syrian's request seems strange, since the knowledge of the fact possessed by the little Hebrew captive in the household of Naaman had prompted the message and the visit of Naaman.

III. *God uses insignificant and despised people as well as great to be instruments for the accomplishment of his purpose.*

The principle acted upon seems to be this: if the results accomplished be so disproportionate to the means used that they cannot be attributed to them as the efficient cause, we must look beyond them or back of them for the real cause. Great things cannot come from little insignificant agencies, except as these are used by a great, intelligent power as a means of producing them. The staff of Moses could not work the wonders of Egypt. No more could Naaman's cure have been wrought by the instrumentalities used.

What a combination of insignificant persons and things work together here in this interesting story to effect that great cure! The sympathetic wish of the little slave girl; the report of it carried by another slave or unknown attendant to the king's palace; the spread of it there through the gossip of slaves and courtiers, until it reaches the king, and prompts him to write to King Jehoram upon the assumption natural to an Oriental despot, as an old divine suggests, that "whatever a subject could do a sovereign might command; that such a prophet could neither be out of the knowledge nor out of the obedience to his prince. Great is the power of princes! Every man's hand is theirs whether for skill or for strength; all excellences of their subjects are no less at their service than if they were inherent in their persons."

When Naaman stands at length at the prophet's door

and receives from him the direction, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times," was ever such a prescription for leprosy heard of? And when, offended at its seeming absurdity and the utter lack of ceremony with which it was given, Naaman was minded to turn away in disgust and anger, and so fail to prove its efficacy and miss its benefit—how singular and contrary to human experience that this proud man's anger should have been opposed and quenched by his menial servants; that they should have had the good sense and courage to speak such a wise remonstrance as this: "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

The use made by God of these insignificant things to accomplish his divine purpose, and the wonderful cure resulting from their use, point unmistakably to their connection with a sovereign power which far exceeded any potency contained in them. It was an Old Testament parallel to a familiar New Testament instance of God's work, concerning which the apostle says (1 Cor. 1 : 27, 28); "God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise . . . and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose . . . that no flesh should glory before God."

In modern history, as well as in ancient sacred history, the same fact is often met with. Some of the greatest inventions, which have added incalculable wealth to the riches of the world, have been conceived and wrought out by poor, insignificant men. Great economic revolutions, great religious, social and political movements like the work of modern missions to the heathen world, the development of republican institutions, and the blessings of democracy, have had a similar origin. True are the poet's words:

> "O Truth, O Freedom, how are ye still born
> In the rude stable, in the manger nursed!

What humble hands unbar those gates of morn,
Through which the splendors of the New Day burst!"

No more interesting example could be found than that which is given us in our own day in the person and work of Booker T. Washington. The world looks with just admiration upon this man, his influence and his great work for the elevation of his race, finding in them evidence of the old, old truth, that for the accomplishment of his divine purposes God often exalts them of low degree, that men may recognize his sovereignty in human affairs and honor as his agents those who signally promote human welfare in harmony with his infinite love.

Three important practical lessons grow out of this truth, which are likewise clearly and strikingly illustrated in the passage we are studying:—

(1) God's ways are inscrutable and, as a matter of course, our preconceived notions of his method of work and manner of dealing with us are likely to be delusive and misleading. A little child cannot form any right idea of his father's plans and action; they are above his comprehension. So of a man's conception of God's ways. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Ps. 139:6). "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Is. 55: 8, 9). Because he did not understand or appreciate this truth Naaman came near losing the benefit of God's gracious help. He supposed that the prophet would proceed after the ostentatious style of an Eastern magician, or quack of some other name, whose hocus-pocus performance he had witnessed, or heard of, and perhaps vainly tried to obtain some benefit from. He looked also for an obsequious show of respect from him, such as was usually paid to a man of his high rank from a quack

anticipating a rich fee from so great a patient. Instead of doing, however, as Naaman had expected, Elisha did not even show himself, but remained in his house, and sent a messenger with a simple direction of what the Syrian was to do. Naaman was angered at this utter failure of his expectations. "I thought, He will surely come out to me," he said, "and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."

There spoke the haughty Syrian, puffed up with the conceit of his country's victorious power and glory, and the pride of his own achievements. "What were Jordan's dirty, tepid waters compared with the clear, cool rivers that flowed down from Lebanon's mountains into the plain of Damascus, creating there a paradise of fruit and beauty, tempering the heat with refreshing coolness, and carrying music and fragrance into its streets and gardens? This contemptible land of Israel which he had repeatedly thrashed with his army,—what had it better to give than mighty Syria afforded?"

The foolishness of anger! The inconsistency of wounded pride! Israel's God and its prophet were certainly better, or Naaman would not have been there. His vain imaginations and the misleading expectations based upon them deluded him.

(2) Pride, arrogance, conceit and self-will stand in the way of men's receiving God's blessing. Naaman's conduct was typical. Every day men are betrayed by these malign influences into hasty acts and foolish courses, by reason of which they fail to benefit from God's loving kindness and gracious purpose to do them good. Happy are they who have wise and faithful counselors in their mothers, wives,

children, friends or servants, to suggest better second thoughts and persuade them to heed these and to act sanely, instead of insanely as anger prompts! One act of folly done in a hasty moment may work irreparable mischief, may frustrate God's gracious purpose of mercy and destroy all chance of fulfilling hopes ardently cherished, to accomplish which we and those who love us have made great endeavors and sacrifices.

(3) Obedience through strict conformity to God's thought and purpose, as these may be revealed to us, is the ordinary channel through which his benefits flow to us. This is a universal rule operative in every realm of human interest. The laws of life must be obeyed, if we would possess health; the laws of the natural world, if we would harness its mighty forces to enterprises for human welfare; the law of justice, if in our social life and our relations to one another we would fully realize the blessings of Christian civilization; the law of faith, if we would find joy and peace in believing; the rule of humble submission to God's truth—whatever it may demand of us and whithersoever it may lead us—if his will is to be done on earth as it is done in heaven, and the gladness of heaven irradiate our earthly existence in its wide range of experience and duties.

Albert H. Currier.

ELISHA AT DOTHAN

2 KINGS 6:8-23

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."—Psalm 34: 7.

Dothan, hardly identified to-day, with meager indications of present human activity, ranks with Bethel and Sinai and Hermon and Patmos, as a place where human eyes had a vision of things that are not seen. Elisha belongs in the peerage of the great seers of God.

Especially notable and pleasing in the story of this prophet is his encounter with a force of hostile Syrians who had plotted to capture him at Dothan. The keen-witted, clear-seeing prophet had so fully anticipated the hostile movements of the Syrians that it had become the eager purpose of the Syrian king, Benhadad, to secure Elisha. The man who could put Jehoram so effectually on guard against Syrian invaders must be silenced, if possible. Learning that Elisha is at Dothan, a force of Syrians surrounds the town by night. A servant of the prophet first discovers the enemy, in the early morning, and, greatly alarmed, informs his master of what appears to him a hopeless situation. But Elisha is undisturbed. His mind is stayed on God. The sublime courage of the besieged prophet had been anticipated in the experience of the great poet of Israel, who sang:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
When evil-doers came upon me to eat up my flesh,
Even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell.

Though an host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear:
Though war should rise against me,
Even then will I be confident."

Elisha prays for his dismayed follower, and the man has a vision of forces, hitherto unseen by him, that guard and help the servants of God. The literal story runs: "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

Opinions differ on the question of miraculous results in this case attained in answer to prayer; but, irrespective of that question, the story before us is highly suggestive. Whether or not we hold that a miracle was wrought for the benefit of the prophet's servant, it is evident that both the prophet and his follower were profoundly impressed regarding unseen realities. Whether miraculously aided or not, they rose to vivid apprehension of the unseen world. The Golden Text declares in concise and beautiful form certain things which were strikingly illustrated in the experience of two men at Dothan, who through faith were made wise and strong and able to defeat all the schemes of a host of enemies. Somehow the servant of Elisha was made to realize a sublime meaning in the words of his master: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Some influence quickened the man, and, either he saw with supernatural vision into that immaterial realm which inspheres and transcends the world and the universe that are real to the senses, or he was so affected by the confidence and courage of his master that his own faith was strengthened and his imagination was stirred to remarkable activity.

We cannot doubt that inhabitants of this world have had impressions made upon them answering to actual recognitions of realities which transcend the realm of sense per-

ception. The human soul is susceptible to impressions of the unseen world which amount to a considerable knowledge of that world. In the higher ranges of human experience some souls seem to have had glimpses of the world to come. Certain realities are known in consciousness although unperceived by the senses. It is profoundly true that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen." The faculty of faith is a native endowment of the soul, helped indeed by education and experience but not created through these processes. That higher intelligences and stronger moral natures should act directly upon the souls of men seems most reasonable, and corresponds to the facts which we realize in the associations and relationships of this life. To determine the point at which such influence from out the invisible world affecting souls here ceases to be what may be termed natural and becomes supernatural to the extent of producing miraculous effects, may be a difficult as well as an interesting problem. We hold that miracles have been wrought in the good providence of God, and that his action in human history has been at times most extraordinary; and if any one knows certainly that the age of miracles has passed he must have been the subject of miraculous influence. But we believe that there is much interaction and intercommunication, as regards the visible and the invisible realms, the world that now is and the higher, heavenly world, which is so far within the sphere of human expectation and cooperation that it should not be classed as miraculous.

Man is not limited to a little space and a brief time; he is a being of two worlds and is capable of eternal life. He has desires and aspirations which discover spiritual and eternal realities. The teachings of inspired souls, the assurances of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the simple and the sublime intimations of immortality and heaven form a

splendid foundation for our faith. We believe in time as well as eternity, in the seen as well as the unseen, in cities and railways and sailing ships, in temples and homes reared by human hands. We rejoice in the measureless bounty, the gladdening beauty, and in all the noble ministry of earthly things; but with larger confidence and profounder joy do we believe in the existence of a higher, purer, eternal world, whose treasures are incorruptible, whose beauty is fadeless, whose joys are exhaustless,

> "Where no shadow shall bewilder;
> Where life's vain parade is o'er;
> Where the sleep of sin is broken,
> And the dreamer dreams no more;
> . . . . . .
> Where the child has found its mother,
> Where the mother finds her child,
> Where dear families are gathered
> That were scattered on the wild;
> Where the smitten heart the freshness
> Of its buoyant youth resumes."

We believe that the world unseen is populous, and that the inhabitants there are not without thoughts and ministries for the inhabitants of this world.

The greatest thing in the lesson before us is the assurance of the watchfulness and help of invisible beings.

> "The eyes of the Lord are in every place,
> Keeping watch upon the evil and the good."

And his watchfulness is supreme helpfulness.

> "God is our refuge and strength,
> A very present help in trouble."

With equal plainness we are told that:

> "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about
> them that fear him,
> And delivereth them."

The Bible is full of the doctrine of ministering spirits. Both the Old and the New Testaments abound with accounts of angelic visitations to this world. Most notable is the presence of angels amid the scenes of the life of Jesus. Zacharias and Elisabeth and Joseph and Mary are thrilled by the presence and messages of heavenly visitors. The birth of Jesus is announced by a mighty choir of angels. In his temptation, and at his baptism, and amid the scenes of his awful death angels ministered to him. Heavenly beings first proclaimed his resurrection. Some of the apostles, notably Paul and Peter, testify to the help of celestial beings. There is evidently great assurance on the part of Paul when he seeks to cheer his companions on the fast wrecking ship: "For there stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Cæsar: and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee."

The Bible represents that angelic ministers amid earthly scenes have been in some cases returning spirits of those who once lived here. Moses and Elias appeared on the mount of transfiguration. St. John tells us that an angel who talked with him refused to be worshiped, on the ground that he was a fellow being: "And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God." It is evident that we have not such visible manifestations as appear to have been granted in times past; but God who has performed miracles is still the same, and there is the same higher world of life and love and heavenly ministries. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?"

"Heaven is nearer than mortals think,
When they look with trembling dread

At the misty future that stretches on
From the silent home of the dead."

It cannot be true that death annihilates human affection which only grows deeper and stronger with the lengthening of earthly life. It has been said that "Washington never loved his country so well as in his farewell address." How the love of parents for their children overflows when they are about to leave them! Christ spoke the most loving words of comfort and instruction when the hour of separation had come. It seems altogether probable that loved ones who have passed into the other world are only made more free and stronger in thoughtfulness and love regarding dear ones here; and, doubtless, their ministries reach back to earth. The deeper consciousness of many good and thoughtful souls seems often filled with assurances of such presence and influence. Sudden impressions of duty, or warnings of danger, or feelings of safety and peace often affect persons in this world, apparently without any earthly cause.

There is a common objection to this view, which may be stated about as follows: If those who are in heaven were permitted to know of the sorrows and sufferings of dear ones from whom death has separated them, they could not be happy. But the more we consider this objection the more unreasonable it appears to be. We can hardly believe that the bliss of heavenly existence is conditioned upon ignorance. It is a strange notion that to be happy in heaven one must be kept in ignorance of the current history of this lower world. Can we conceive that a noble mother could reach such a state of heavenly perfection as to be unwilling, on any ground whatever, to know of the life of her children on earth? Under certain circumstances, what is more dreadful than the suspense of ignorance? Knowledge of the worst is better than the torture of uncertainty. Unless heaven destroys the sweetest

and holiest emotions that spring in human hearts here, unless the purest affections and noblest desires in this world are solemn mockeries, there could hardly be greater misery than to be denied all knowledge of loved ones on earth. We may not understand how heaven compensates for the sorrow that must accompany knowledge in many cases; but if the redeemed cannot be happy and still know about mournful things in this world, then our reasoning must bring us to the logical conclusion that God is the most unhappy being in the universe, for he knows all things. But God is the infinitely perfect one, and his angels and all the redeemed must perfectly share his own peace and bliss, while they gladly avail themselves of any opportunity in heaven or on earth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation. The highest joy of heaven must be realized through rendering the greatest service for the good of others.

In view of Christ's life and teachings we may believe that there could be no finer joy for a soul in heaven than to hasten to earth on some errand of love, to soothe some mortal in tears, or give moral support to one battling with temptation, or influence one in the crisis of some weighty decision, or to stand by one struggling with death and greet the immortal spirit on the instant of release. The more perfectly we understand human life, the more truly we appreciate the marvelous providences that attend us, the more seriously we realize what it means to conduct a human life through this world of sin and sorrow and death, the more we ought to be impressed by the fact and the value of unseen helpers who are united with God to accomplish his purposes of love. It is not essential to their ministry for us that we should be always conscious that the angels of the Lord are encamping round about us; still we may be confronted and strengthened by simply believing that it is true. By thankfully remembering this fact

we may help to bring ourselves into harmony with high and holy purposes, and we may more surely submit ourselves to gracious influences from above.

It is one of the most inspiring messages to the Christian, that he may pass through this world with a mighty confidence that invisible friends and helpers are near, and that when that great change which hastens to us all shall have come to him, his eyes closing forever to friends in this world will open upon a glorious scene where the King in his beauty reigns supreme.

George E. Hall.

JOASH THE BOY KING

2 Kings 11: 1-16

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice."—Prov. 29: 2.

For a long time there had been strife between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, but Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, "made peace with the king of Israel" and gave his son Jehoram in marriage to Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, hoping by this political alliance to unite the two kingdoms under one head as in the days of David and Solomon. It was a noble desire, but it failed of its purpose. For Athaliah was too much like her mother, the wicked Jezebel, and too wedded to heathenism to be acceptable to the servants of Jehovah. She acquired a commanding influence for evil over both her husband and her son, and established the worship of Baal in Jerusalem, "breaking up the house of God," probably to secure materials for a temple for Baal, and "bestowing all the dedicated things of the house of Jehovah upon the Baalim." One can easily understand the exasperation of the people when they saw the temple profaned and impoverished. It took many years to restore and replenish it.

But Athaliah's wickedness did not stop here. When her son after a year's reign was put to death by that zealous reformer Jehu, she killed, as she supposed, all of his sons, her own grandchildren, that she might reign in their stead. One child, the infant Joash, escaped her mad fury, the sole survivor of the royal line of David. Hidden away in the

house of Jehovah until he was seven years old, he was brought forward at a timely moment for the confusion of his grandmother, he being crowned and she being put to death.

The *coup d'etat* which resulted so fortunately for him and for the kingdom was effected by the high priest Jehoiada, one of the grandest figures of the Old Testament. In him we have one of those righteous men in whose authority the people rejoice. He was a patriot and a statesman as well as the high priest. Upon him devolved a tremendous responsibility as custodian of the infant but uncrowned king, the hope of the nation while he was a babe in arms. On the life of this child hung the promise that a successor should not be lacking to David, nor a needed ancestor to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

At this critical time God had in Jehoiada a trusty servant, a man competent for great affairs as well as a priest trained for the altar. To be chief priest were honor enough and work enough for any man. But to Jehoiada came the difficult and dangerous task first of concealing, then at the right moment of revealing the heir to the throne, seating him firmly upon it and managing the kingdom during his boyhood and youth. It was a mighty task and called for the noblest qualities, heroism, leadership, self-abnegation as well as indifference to censure. For he was sure to be charged with selfish motives. The authority which he must assume he would be suspected of ambitiously desiring for his own sake. He must be proof against misrepresentation and slander, calmly waiting for the time when he could prove the falsity of such suspicions by surrendering the power to the maturing king.

No doubt he shrank from the task, from its perils and obligations. What satisfaction could it give him apart from the consciousness of having done his duty? To wield a power which he must certainly relinquish; to know that

as the king increased he would decrease, what pleasure was there in that? We like a thing which we can keep, an office which we need not surrender, an authority which grows larger rather than smaller.

Could we choose the tasks which we most desire and hold them as long as we pleased, many posts of duty would remain unfilled and few bishoprics be surrendered. But we must leave to God the management of his own affairs, content with a regency until the King comes to his own. The noble thing about Jehoiada was that he accepted the specific thing required of him, cheerfully retiring into the background when the time had come for another to occupy the center of the stage. It was enough for him to have had the life of the king in his keeping, saving him from death, placing him on the throne and administering the government during his minority. In all those years Jehoiada had occupied the center of the platform. What mattered it if he were subsequently forgotten? The play could never have gone on without him.

And who but may comfort himself with this thought? Others may occupy our places by and by even as we have entered into the labors of our predecessors. The chain cannot be complete without every link. Great men are dependent upon smaller ones. Even Jesus needed John the Baptist to prepare the way before him, and Moses owed his life to his little sister Miriam.

Joash reigned forty years, restored the temple and promoted the worship of Jehovah, carried on the line of David and left numerous heirs, but what could he have done without Jehoiada, the rescuer and guardian of his tender years? Nay, what could he have done without Jehosheba, Jehoiada's wife, who had the care of the infant king? Her husband did the planning, won the leaders of the nation to cooperate with him, conquered any jealousy and stilled any opposition which may have arisen. His was

the masterful part, skilful and successful to the last degree. But out of sight in some quiet corner of the temple, some old lumber-room thought to contain nothing but rubbish, was the infant king and his ever anxious, always faithful nurse, his aunt Jehosheba. Was ever a woman more distressed than she, filled with constant dread lest the brutal Athaliah should learn of the child and take its life and hers! The safest place was the most dangerous place,—within a step of death—yet so well did she guard the young child's life that when he was needed he was forthcoming.

That was Jehosheba's day of triumph as well as her husband's and the king's. Who could forget on that day the faithful woman who had shielded the king for six long years? And yet in the rush of subsequent events she was forgotten. For the world's memory is sadly short. It little notes nor long remembers many of the noblest things that are ever done. How often do we stop to think of and be thankful for the services which were rendered us when we were babes in our mother's arms? How tremendous is our debt to our brothers and sisters, especially the latter, many of whom have sacrificed their lives that we men might go forth to fight the world and make homes of our own, while they, our unmarried sisters, care for our aged parents—often lacking many things which we have in abundance!

Then there are our teachers from the primary grade up, who have been putting us in their debt all these years, helping us to develop our minds, but too often getting no expression of gratitude from our hearts. What a host of obligations are brought to our remembrance by the mere mention of this ancient woman's name, Jehosheba! How many of our short-comings stand before us at the thought of this infant king, and of the need of such friends as he found in Jehoiada and Jehosheba!

But what was their animating motive? The thought of

God and their duty to him and their fellow men, whom a wicked woman, a murderess and a usurper, was trying to lead astray. Athaliah worshiped Baal, and would bring every Israelite if she could to her way of thinking. Jehoiada believed in God. He could not endure the thought of Israel going after strange divinities, forsaking the Lord who had led them out of Egypt and made them mighty under David and Solomon, every descendant of whom save one,—this helpless babe—had been put to death. Never had the outlook seemed darker than to this man and woman who had rescued the infant Joash from the sword of the assassin. Yet somehow this child, like the greater One that was to be, was "set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against." And the chief priest and his wife believed it. They were sure that God would do wonders through him, and use them in part to accomplish His purpose. So they gave themselves to the task of executing the divine will; and what dignity of soul they acquired from the thought that they were thus cooperating with God! It steadied and strengthened them, giving them a might and majesty which no one could resist. Their well-laid plans were carried through with precision. Joash was crowned and Athaliah put to death almost more quickly than the story could be told. Then a covenant was made not only between the people and the king, but between the people and Jehovah, who, by putting Joash on the throne had redeemed his promise that an heir should not be lacking to David. So through it all the thought of God was foremost, dominating the lives of priest and king and people in this crisis of their history.

In looking back to that remote event how fortunate it was for Israel that two such persons as Jehoiada and Jehosheba were there! otherwise things had gone to destruction. But things do not go to destruction in God's

world. In every crisis he always has some one to represent him; to stand in the breach and say the word or do the thing which saves the day even if the man himself falls, as Stephen did at Jerusalem and Paul at Rome. The cause triumphs even when the hero falls.

But is not he móst to be congratulated who has the insight of faith, the courage and fidelity to choose to be God's representative? Israel was fortunate in Jehoiada, but was not Jehoiada immensely fortunate in having sense enough in that dark hour to stand with God? And who so unfortunate as Athaliah who thought to oppose him?

There is a lesson here for all. For parents, rightly to influence their children, as Jehosheba must have tried to influence the young king, both before and after he was crowned, to be true to Jehovah who had set him on the throne. There is a lesson for boys and girls, who must decide each for himself what use he will make of his life, whether to serve God or Baal. To each of us God gives a work as real as that which fell to Jehoiada, who was under no greater obligation to do his part than we are to do ours.

Samuel C. Bushnell.

JOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE

2 KINGS 12:4-15

"And Jehoash said to the priests," etc.

The temple of those days was not yet old. Less than one hundred and fifty years had elapsed since its dedication amid the pomp and splendor of King Solomon, and a hundred and fifty years is no great period in the lifetime of such a building. Do we not see the cathedrals of modern Europe standing in stately beauty and undecaying strength through many centuries, while the swift generations of men come and go about their doors? Solomon's temple had been built to last. It was composed of the most enduring material,—great marble blocks hewn from the mountains, cedar of Lebanon, fir and olive wood, burnished brass, pure gold and precious stones. It was constructed with the utmost painstaking care, every block made ready at the quarry, every beam and plank and metal plate adjusted beforehand to its place, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the house while it was building. And yet in the first half of its second century, it had already grown shabby and was sadly in need of repair. This premature decay was doubtless due to the fact that, for the greater part of that period, it had found little protection from the two relentless enemies that inevitably attack and soon or late bring to ruin every pile which human wisdom can devise or human craft erect,—to wit, the hand of the vandal and the tooth of time. A house well cared for, if properly built in the first place,

lasts indefinitely; but a neglected building, however well constructed, will soon be crumbling and decaying.

We learn from our Scripture, then, first of all, that the work of preservation is second only in importance to that of construction. What has been nobly built by the fathers must be nobly kept by the sons. Moreover the preserver requires for his task the same high skill, the same loving, painstaking care as the original builder.

Each great European cathedral has its regular corps of repairers,—architects, engineers, masons, carpenters, every man a master of his craft. The work of renovation goes on at all seasons, crumbling stones must be replaced, fresh cement supplied, broken parts mended; there is always something needing to be done. The inexperienced traveler is at first much annoyed by the sight of the stagings and scaffoldings from which cathedral walls seem never wholly free. "When," he exclaims, "shall I at last find a façade which is not in the process of repair?" But with larger knowledge and more careful thought his feelings change. The flimsy, unsightly framework clinging to the ancient gray stone no longer seems a blemish, but a true adornment, since it eloquently tells of the reverent, affectionate care which faithfully preserves for the future these "poems in stone" handed down from the mighty past.

The lesson equally applies to the more modest houses of worship which we Protestants of the new world have erected in God's honor. You cannot build so finely and substantially that you may afterwards afford to neglect the building. No sooner is it finished than the elements begin their attack. Sun and winds parch it, rains drench it, the frosts with their huge shoulders heave at its foundations, the heaped snowbanks strain its roofs, the all-pervasive dust settles thick upon it. The stoutest carpets will in time wear through, the finest fresco tints fade and grow dingy, doors sag, windows be broken, contrivances for

light, for heat, for ventilation grow antiquated and outworn. The house of God needs frequently to be renovated. The more costly, elaborate and beautiful it is, the more serious the task of keeping it in good condition. A well ordered church will not neglect its house of worship until the place has grown intolerably shabby, but will make prompt and regular appropriations for its care. Is it not a trust committed to us by those who have gone before? Shall we not make it a point of honor to hand the sacred edifice over to our successors in at least as good a condition as that in which it came to us?

The forlorn state of the temple when young King Jehoash came to his throne is easily explained. The kings of Judah and the people of Jerusalem had largely lost their interest in that for which the temple stood. The worship of Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, had fallen into decadence and neglect among them, while Phœnician idols held their hearts. What cared such a woman as Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah, idolatress and murderess of her own grandchildren, for the courts of the Lord's house! She would be glad to see them crumbling and forsaken; gladder still if they should go to utter rack and ruin; and the people whom she gathered about her doubtless heartily agreed with her. But when a different set of men came into power,—Jehoiada the warrior priest and Jehoash the upright and reverent young king at their head—the shabby, neglected appearance of the temple, which their predecessors had viewed with complacency, became a painful, shameful sight; and they were eager to restore its pristine splendor.

Here, therefore, a second lesson emerges from this Scripture. We see in the Lord's house an index of the people. Its character, its appearance, tells the story of their spiritual condition. When in a region of fine residences which stand in stately beauty amid velvet lawns

and flower-beds, one comes upon a wretched little church, looking shabby and shamefaced enough in the presence of its elegant neighbors, such a sight needs no interpreter. Any child would know that the folks thereabout love themselves better than they love God. Again, you will find a place where the church seems to dominate the whole neighborhood; no other building is so noble, none so beautiful, none cared for with such watchful tenderness. And here the presence of a reverent and genuine religious spirit is as manifest in the homes that cluster about the sanctuary as was its absence from that other region. For it is not only true that the mouth speaketh, but also that the hand worketh out of the abundance of the heart. As a man thinketh in his heart, so *buildeth* he. When self-interest is the supreme thing with him and religion a subordinate matter, you will observe that nothing seems to him too fine for his own dwelling and no pains too great for the advancement of his own fortune, while almost anything will serve him as a church. If a new sanctuary is called for you can count on him to oppose the movement. The old house is good enough, he maintains. Or if a new building is determined upon, he stoutly stands for something very plain and simple, built of the cheapest material. This is the man who is always reluctant to undertake needed repairs. He has noticed no holes in the carpet; he has observed no mildew on the walls; the dinginess of the ceiling has not interfered with his devotions. In all expenditures for the kingdom of heaven, whether at home or abroad, economy would appear to him the chief thing to be studied.

It is not so with one who honestly loves God with all his might. Love does not grudge its gifts. Any defect, any flaw, any token of decay or neglect in his Father's house will grieve such a man. When he builds a church his reverent and beautiful thought of God will express

itself in the noblest and loveliest forms that his mind can conceive or his hand execute. When he receives by inheritance a sanctuary that consecrated men of former days have erected, he will protect it, repair it and improve it with faithful, painstaking care.

All this which has been said of the material buildings which Christian men have erected to the glory of God, is quite as true of those immaterial, those spiritual structures to which they have put their hand. If houses of wood and stone require ceaseless care lest they crumble and decay, how much greater must be the vigilance demanded for the preservation in beauty and power of forms constructed out of the shifting spirits of men: the state with all its precious institutions; the church as a spiritual body with the great and various enterprises that it has in hand; our splendid charities; our magnificent missions; our schools and universities? What lavish gifts, what wealth of painstaking, self-denying care and unrequited toil, all these demand that they may be saved from disintegrating influences, and kept vigorous and efficient. Each generation in its turn becomes trustee, and is judged,—approved or condemned at the solemn bar of human history,—according to its faithfulness to these high interests.

It is to be noted that the movement for the repair of the temple did not begin with the priest, not with Jehoiada, although all Hebrew history has not a finer specimen of priesthood to show than he, but with young King Jehoash. It was he who first suggested it, it was he who, when the work flagged, rallied it and carried it through to completion. There is a special reason why the young fellow should be interested in that stately and venerable pile, namely, that it was the home of his childhood. Here it was that his aunt, Jehosheba, had hidden him when, as a babe, she had rescued him from his bloodthirsty grand-

mother, Athaliah. For six years one of the little chambers above the wall had been his nursery. Of all familiar objects the temple was therefore the most familiar to him. He knew every stone of it, and doubtless regarded it with that deep, unconscious affection which transfigures those things that cluster about our early years. The simple old song touches us all—

> "How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood,
> When fond recollection presents them to view!"

It is no wonder, then, that when he came to kingly power, one of the young monarch's first undertakings was to repair the breaches of the Lord's house.

The story suggests an admirable plan of life insurance for churches. If you wish to assure your sanctuary against injury on the part of the two aforesaid enemies, the hand of the vandal and the tooth of time, all you need to do is to make it dear to a host of little children, who, having learned to love it when their hearts were tender, will be faithful to defend it when their hands are strong.

How many a church owes its present prosperity, if not its very existence, to this wise policy! It formerly flourished in the midst of a godly community. On every Lord's Day the rejoicing people filled its courts and there was no lack in its treasury. But there came a gradual change. The young people moved away; the pillars of the church, one by one, passed on to their reward, and there were fewer and fewer to replace them. Strangers and aliens came to occupy the old farms. The meeting-house, which once was full to overflowing on Sunday morning, now witnessed but a scanty congregation. The treasury suffered; there was little to pay the pastor's salary and nothing to repair the breaches in the wall. Then it was that her children came to her rescue. They who used, as tow-

headed youngsters, to scuffle in the doorways and nestle in the pews and whisper in the classes, now grown to be prosperous people, came back from their distant homes to the beloved mother church with big hearts and generous purses. And so, though many friends have left her and difficulties thicken about her, she is still enabled to bear in that community her solemn witness to the transcendent truths of Christ's gospel.

Surely a church has no more important business than that of endearing herself and her Master to the children. Yet it is to be feared that, in many cases, she has so far forgotten this, that the house of God, instead of being the dearest of all places to the children of the community, seems tedious and unattractive.

Our Scripture suggests, finally, that the financial affairs of the church ought, above all things, to be faithfully and efficiently administered. The priests to whom the work of repair and the responsibility of securing funds for that purpose were at first entrusted, seem to have had little concern for anything beyond the getting of their own living out of the job. The people, distrusting such agents, were reluctant to supply the needed cash. So little was given, nothing was done and the affair dragged on through tedious years; the breaches in the wall, meanwhile, widening with every season. At last the king, disgusted with their dilatoriness, inefficiency and probable dishonesty, dismissed them all, adopted a new plan of raising money, one in which the people had confidence, and committed the work of repair to trustworthy hands; whereupon the inflow of cash immediately began, and continued until an abundance for the purpose had been secured. The work was then taken up and carried speedily through to completion.

As we read the story we are led to observe that slackness, dilatoriness, inefficiency and dishonesty are nowhere else

quite so offensive as when they appear in the administration of religion, and that the best business methods are nowhere quite so appropriate as in conducting the financial affairs of a church.

Samuel Lane Loomis.

ISAIAH'S MESSAGE TO JUDAH

Isa. 1: 1-9, 16-20

"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." etc.

Every student of history is impressed by the grouping of great men and the sequence of seminal events in certain fertile epochs. After long intervals of comparative inactivity, the world awakens to new ideas whose prophets arise on every hand and sound the trumpets of advance. Such a period was that of the Reformation, when the germinant principles of modern civilization were proclaimed. Such an era in English history was the age of Elizabeth, which saw the foundations laid for England's colonial empire and her commercial greatness at the same time that her literature blossomed forth in unrivaled splendor. But of all such germinal epochs in human history, few can rival the latter half of the eighth century before Christ. In Greece this period marks the line between romantic legend and credible history, and with the first Olympiad, 775 B.C., begins the record of the development of that unique and fascinating civilization. Rome was founded in 753 B.C. and began the career of conquest which made her the mistress of the ancient world. During the same half century, Assyria, Rome's great predecessor in the making of a world-empire, carried her victorious banners to the Mediterranean, and by the conquest of Hamath, Damascus and Samaria, realized the

dream of all rulers of the Euphrates plain, the extension of their power "from the River unto the ends of the earth."

And this same fruitful epoch saw the beginnings of prophetic literature in Israel. The mighty influence of Samuel, Elijah, Elisha and the other earlier prophets was exerted through the living voice. They deeply moved the men of their generation, but only fragmentary remains of their messages survived them. But now there came forward a remarkable group of men, who were driven by the jealousy of intriguing priests or hostile kings to commit their words to writing, and whose teachings have thus continued to influence the thought of the world even to our day. Much as we owe to the literature and art of Greece and to the political and practical genius of Rome, it may well be doubted whether both combined have contributed more to the making of the modern world than this early literature of a feeble and dying nation. God's best gifts to the world are not institutions nor empires, not poems nor paintings, but men. In the catalogue of ascension gifts from the hand of the risen Christ, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, only men are mentioned. And these mighty prophecies contain the crystallized life-blood of great spirits, as Milton said every good book does.

These were four remarkable men whom God gave to this little land almost at the same time,—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. The essentials of their messages were the same. Each had a profound sense of God's holiness, and a deep conviction of the nation's sin. Each warned of impending judgment, and called to penitence and faith. Yet each had his own distinctive message. Amos was the prophet of judgment; Hosea the prophet of divine love; Micah the tribune of the people. Isaiah, the greatest of them all, began his ministry a little later than Amos and Hosea, whose words profoundly impressed him, and his

own ministry was reinforced by that of his younger contemporary, Micah. His analysis of sin is as relentless as that of Amos, and his appeal to the conscience more searching and convincing. He lacks something of Hosea's winsome tenderness in picturing the divine love, but his proclamation of God's grace rises to heights of poetic grandeur unknown to the "evangelical prophet." Micah's denunciation of the ruling classes embodies the bitterness of heart of the defrauded poor for whom he speaks. But Isaiah, with equal indignation against social wrong, has a fuller understanding of the conditions of social redemption and a positive program of reform. His philosophy of history is comprehensive, and he looks out upon a wider world than his fellow prophets. In him preeminently the prophet becomes the statesman, and his counsel directs the national policy in critical times. To the common body of prophetic doctrine he adds the development of the idea of the saving remnant of Israel and the inspiration of a clearer Messianic hope.

This opening chapter of the book which bears his name is a summary of his earlier preaching. The title excludes the prophecies concerning foreign nations, and the passage serves as a preface to the first twelve chapters of the book. The imagery is that of a court of law. Ewald has called it "The Great Arraignment." God is both judge and plaintiff; Israel, the defendant; heaven and earth, the jury; the prophet, at the same time the principal witness and the prosecuting attorney. We have first the indictment, with evidence of its truth; then the defense offered by the accused, with its refutation; and, finally, the decision of the Court.

I. *The Indictment. The nation is ungrateful, foolish and wicked.*

To Isaiah's mind the root of the national sin is in their failure to comprehend the character of Jehovah. He accuses

them, therefore, of heedless ignorance and folly. "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." They act as if the Governor of the universe were a fool, to be readily deceived and easily bribed into acquiescence. Constantly he reminds them that God is intelligent, that he discerns between profession and performance, that he weighs motives and judges the heart, and that his laws are eternal (5:13; 28:17, 18; 30:18; 31:2, etc.). "My people do not *think*" is God's complaint, through the prophet's lips. Hosea had emphasized the same fundamental failure. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;" "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (Hos. 4:1—6, etc.). They do not take into consideration the character of Jehovah as a wise, just, holy and all-seeing Judge. If they did, such conduct as theirs would be inconceivable. The warning of Amos contains the same accusation. But this opening chapter of Isaiah emphasizes the other side of this truth, namely, that God is a reasonable being, and that his service is rational service. He summons men into his presence that they may present their claims one before the other.

Such a conception of Jehovah was startling to a nation steeped in sensuality and seeking to quiet conscience by meaningless ritual. It is always hard to make men think deeply of their relation to God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, *and with all thy mind*," said Jesus, adding the last clause to the quotation from Deuteronomy. Paul exhorts us to consecration to the service of God as a "reasonable service," namely, one that calls for the exercise of the mind and spirit. We laugh at the Chinaman, celebrating the New Year in midsummer in order to deceive the fever-god and make him think he has made a mistake in the season, and thus stop the plague. We ridicule the African, making as much smoke as possible in his sacrifice in order to conceal his doings from the

eyes of the divinity. But on every hand men are just as foolishly trying to cheat God, and ignore his laws, hoping to escape the penalty. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Sin is always and everywhere folly as well as wickedness, and the first count of the prophet's indictment holds against modern offenders as well as against ancient Israel. "Do you suppose Mr. X believes in the judgment?" asked an old sea-captain once, referring to a prominent church-member who was notoriously inconsistent. "If he does, I can't see how he dares to do these things," he added. Do you believe in God? Do you believe in his omniscience? Do you believe in his judgment? Do you believe in his great love, in Jesus Christ? If we have ever seen and known God, as Jesus reveals him, how incomprehensible is our sin!

The sins of which the prophet accuses the nation are those of ingratitude and idolatry, sins against God; and corruption, cruelty, injustice and debauchery, social iniquities. These are the common accusations of all the prophets. "She that was full of judgment! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water." A plated aristocracy, a diluted religion, degenerate morals. What a picture! And who can measure the influence of the ideal of spiritual worship and moral uprightness which these prophets consistently uphold before the eyes of men as the essential of religion!

The proof of the accusation is found in the punishment of the nation. It is not always true in the case of an individual that misfortune is the penalty for wrong-doing. The book of Job refutes that dogma of ancient seers. But it is true that national decay is usually the result of national degeneracy. We have in our own times a lamentable illustration of a nation crushed by tyranny while its life remains

pure and vigorous in the extinction of Finland's political life by Russia. But the general truth of history remains. As Froude has stated it:—"Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity. For every false word or unrighteous deed, for cruelty and oppression, for lust or vanity, the price has to be paid at last; not always by the chief offenders, but paid by some one." And in the case of Israel, such punishment was the direct fulfilment of the covenant of Jehovah with the nation.

II. *The Defense of the Accused. The nation was never more religious, and all forms of worship are observed.*

Idolatry had largely disappeared. The temple services were crowded. The smoke of incense and sacrifice continually ascended. Who was more religious than Judah? How indignantly the prophet thrusts away this flimsy defense! Religiousness is not religion. In his indignation he does not hesitate to call his beloved Jerusalem by the very name of the cities of destruction, Sodom and Gomorrah. Micah, Amos and Hosea have all given us similar distinctions between formal and real worship, but none is more searching than this. President Gates, of Pomona College, puts it into modern terminology thus: "What do I care about your tramping up and down the aisles of my churches, or even sitting about the communion-table. I hate your church-going and prayer-meeting attending. Stop doing wrong in your business and politics! Protect my poor against every injustice! But even now there is hope for you, and I'll forgive you, if you will do better. But, oh, how has the faithful house of God become a house of shame! Even your solemn prayers I will not hear. Cease to do evil; learn to do well; that is what I want for worship." Surely the storm of the prophet's righteous wrath does "sweep away the refuge of lies." His message to Judah is terribly modern. Morality is not religion.

Worship is not unnecessary, and prayer is not to be despised. But religious worship that does not issue in righteous living is a mockery, and prayer that does not help men to self-denying service is an abomination. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

It is interesting to note the standards by which the nation is judged. There is an appeal to the order and obedience of nature. Heaven and earth are called to judge this rebellious and unnatural people. There is an appeal to their own history. They have been nurtured and brought up by the God whose service they now repudiate. There is an appeal to conscience. The whole passage summons man before the bar of his own conscience and bids him think and judge. Dr. George Adam Smith quotes this impressive passage from Victor Hugo, as an illustration of this imperative: "Man is compelled to repeat to himself things he desires to be silent about, and to listen to what he does not wish to hear, . . . yielding to that mysterious power which says to him, Think. One can no more prevent the mind from returning to an idea than the sea from returning to a shore. With the sailor this is called the tide; with the guilty it is called remorse. God upheaves the soul as well as the ocean."

And, lastly, there is the appeal to the divine law. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah"—not the temple observances, not ecclesiastical conventions, but the eternal moral law, which abides forever unchanged, the law of justice, truth and mercy. And by all these standards the people and their rulers are condemned.

III. *The Decision of the Court. Justice and mercy.*

The logical end of the argument is condemnation for the nation. But not so with God for Judge! The won-

drous thing in God's dealing is that conviction leads to offers of mercy instead of unsparing condemnation. "Come now, let us bring our reasoning to an end," was Cheyne's suggested translation for verse 18, adopted by Dr. George Adam Smith, but since withdrawn by its author. "Let us implead one another," is Dr. Skinner's version. Let us state the case, each for himself. But whether Cheyne's suggestion be adopted or not, as a translation, it sets forth the facts of the case. The end of the argument has been reached. Man has nothing to say. He stands convicted on every count of the indictment. And now God sets forth his verdict. In spite of sins of ignorance, presumption and wilfulness, he offers pardon to all who will repent. The consequences of sin must be suffered by the land, but a remnant shall remain, purged of the dross, and "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment."

The central truth about the divine nature is not even that God is the Supreme Reason, but that God is Love. Love seeks out the foolish and rebellious people and calls them children still. Love provides a way whereby the banished prodigals may be ransomed and brought home. Side by side with the certainty of judgment for sin, all the pages of prophecy are brightened by the even greater assurance of forgiving love and the hope of redemption. This assurance of divine grace, and this inextinguishable hope made those prophecies the central power in upholding the national life. And this has made them precious to millions of believers.

Here in the very opening of the prophecy of Isaiah we have the eternal truths at the basis of all genuine religion —the holiness of God; the eternity of righteousness; the moral imperative; the sense of social responsibility; the inevitable punishment for sin; and the assurance of pardon and redemption. To such mighty themes the prophet summons us as he summoned ancient Judah. Think, think,

think! Consider the character of the God whom you serve, the kind of worship and service you are offering to him, your social responsibilities and opportunities, and worship him with an open mind and serve him in your day and generation with the spirit of Him "who went about doing good."

Edward McArthur Noyes.

WORLD'S TEMPERANCE SUNDAY

ISAIAH 28: 1-13

"These also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are gone astray."—Is. 28: 7.

"The twenty-eighth chapter of the book of Isaiah is one of the greatest of his prophecies." Read simply by itself, we find vigorous passages and single sentences that have become popular proverbs. But only a close study of the chapter shows its real greatness, furnishing at the same time an admirable illustration of the aid to be received from historical criticism. It is a large canvas that is stretched before us, and the colors are vivid. The four great nations of that day are pictured with powerful strokes. You may not have discovered them, but here are God's two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, with all-conquering Assyria and crafty Egypt. Here we have Machiavellian diplomacy contrasted with true statesmanship, brilliant power and terrible ruin, reckless corruption and unconquerable righteousness, the terrible wrath of Jehovah and his redeeming mercies. We see fading garlands and imperishable diadems, babes and warriors, saints and scorners, raging tempests and quiet rest. Let us see how these come to light.

The scene is Jerusalem; the time about 725 B.C. Hezekiah has but just come to the throne, inheriting from his father Ahaz distressing subjection to Assyria, with an empty treasury, ruined peasantry, unprotected frontier, shattered army, and, worst of all, a defiled sanctuary

and debased priesthood. In his court Isaiah was the most conspicuous figure. Wise counsellor in affairs of state, messenger of divine revelations, he proved the king's greatest helper in the noble work of restoration. The time was critical. Assyria had humbled both Israel and Judah, but subdued or conciliated neither. When once her armies withdrew and the yoke became heavy, the sullen tributaries were continually stirring for revolt. The great rival of Assyria was Egypt, just now under a brilliant and ambitious usurper, Seve (or So), who was glad enough to make trouble for Assyria by stirring her restless dependents with vain promises of help which proved only a curse. A strong Egyptian party developed in both northern and southern kingdoms, urging alliance with him and breaking of treaty with Shalmanezer. This Isaiah denounced as fruitless treachery and sure destruction; and king and prophet together kept Judah out of the danger. But the northern kingdom took the fatal plunge. Read in 2 Kings 17:4 the account of the tragedy, brief as from one who shrank from the record. "And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and offered no present (tribute) to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. . . . Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years . . . took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria." Even as Isaiah was declaring his warning, Shalmanezer was starting from Nineveh on the march of vengeance. To Samaria, capital of Israel (Ephraim), the prophet points. She sits queenlike on her hill-crest, guarded on three sides by mountains whose slopes, as now, were fat with olive orchards, looking westward over Sharon's flowered plain and the sunset sea. Fair, but doomed; for within her palaces is debauchery such as Amos pictured half a century before, men—and women—lolling on their couches of ivory, making merry

with tabret and viol, gulping down their wine from basins. "The drunkards of Ephraim"—that tells the story. The God whose allegiance they had cast off with a treachery baser than that against Assyria is using Assyria's king as his avenger. While they riot in the sunshine, a tempest is rising, black and thunderous. The garlands shall be whirled from the head of the revelers and trampled in the mire. That glorious beauty is fragile as a fading flower, a fig untimely ripe snatched and devoured by the passer-by. But mercies break in upon judgment. Even in Samaria are some true souls whom Jehovah of hosts shall crown with unfading diadem in that awful day, men just in judgment and strong in battle, the residue of his people, the saving remnant of the righteous so precious in all Isaiah's prophecy. Read now the first six verses with this explanation in mind.

Long centuries ago Samaria became a ruin. Three dire years of siege, and her garlanded beauty was trampled under the conqueror's feet, the people of the northern kingdom dragged into unreturning captivity, and Israel as a nation died as the fool dieth. Twenty-seven centuries ago! But if ever a prophet of God can characterize our chief men and our common citizens as the drunkards of Washington, of New York, of Chicago, of Boston, some mighty vengeance will be gathering on the horizon for our destruction. Drunkards! Instead of just rulers—drunkards; instead of upright judges—drunkards; instead of honest merchants, industrious citizens, self-controlled youth, pure matrons and unsullied maidens—drunkards! Then pride will be turned to shame; poverty come upon riches; faithfulness and faith in man perish together. We shall break treaty with nations as we have already broken treaty with the Indian in the west and the negro in the south. Broken trust in places of trust, broken agreements between capital and labor, operative and owner, corporation

and labor union, shall follow breaking of faith with God. The drunkard breaks faith with his own soul; how can we think he will keep it with man or with God himself? The City of Mansoul becomes anarchy. Reason, judgment and sound sense, integrity, faithfulness, truth, and all the noble lineage of conscience; considerateness, pity, mercy, affection, help, and all the fair daughters of a sound heart; reverence, godly fear, abhorrence of evil, love to God and love to man, the fruits of the Spirit, are dethroned; character, society, national existence, are destroyed.

Not yet have we come to that pass. Where Isaiah saw the righteous but a saving remnant, we believe our great common people followers of sobriety and righteousness. But individual and household tragedies are abundant enough to make every true soul of man or boy, woman or maid, hate the curse which summed up the follies and crimes and corruptions of that doomed nation in the phrase—the drunkards of Ephraim. Do not make the phrase too narrowly literal. The one to be feared is not alone the victim of uncontrolled appetite; it is every one who gives himself to lightness and revelry when the times call for soberness of mind, and makes life an indulgence when God calls for consecration. It is every one who puts himself and his gain or pleasure above honorable devotion to his country and faithful allegiance to its God.

To this fierce denunciation of the northern kingdom the people of Judah may have listened not quite unwillingly. It is easy to see justice in the punishment of an enemy or rival. But in the seventh verse the prophet makes a sharp turn upon Judah herself. The Authorized Version gives no hint of the change: "But they also have erred through . . . strong drink." The Revision hints it: "But these also." Those drunkards up there are doomed; but these also—as he sweeps eye and hand around upon the people of Jerusalem. And here it is priest and prophet, the very

guardians of religion and messengers of holy truth, that are corrupted. Their visions are a drunken frenzy. They real and stagger while giving counsel and judgment. These ministers of Jehovah he shows at their feasting so loathsome that he casts the very words out of his mouth with disgust.

The ninth and tenth verses should be printed in quotation marks, representing an interruption from the revelers. Stung with Isaiah's rebuke, they shout back on him, Who is it you are talking to? You treat us like babes. You are always at us, and we are tired of it! Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little. "We must conceive the abrupt, intentionally short, reiterated and almost childish words of verse ten as spoken in mockery, with a mocking motion of the head, and in a childish, stammering, taunting tone. It is very distinct in the broken monosyllables of the Hebrew: Ki tsav la-tsav, tsav la-tsav, qav la-qav, qav la-qav; z'eir sham, z'eir sham." (Ewald, quoted by George Adam Smith.) And upon these scorners he turns with dire reiteration. God shall teach you his lesson by strangers' lips, hosts of invaders whose language is to you unintelligible as a child's stammering; you to whom he offered rest and peace, but you would not hear. And the lesson then will be not words but deeds; a dread monotony of punishment in long reiteration. For one hundred and thirty-four troubled years after the fall of Samaria Jerusalem endured. But now for twenty-five centuries that people, chosen of their God but betrayed by their disloyalty, have borne the fulfilment of this prophecy in the eyes of the whole world, blow upon blow, blow upon blow, stroke upon stroke, stroke upon stroke, here a great deal, there a great deal. When God speaks he means it. What he threatens befalls.

Ancient prophecy this, but no truth more modern shall be spoken in the twentieth century pulpit to-day. It is to

those who tire of the constant call of virtue, fret at the perpetual insistence of duty, rebel at the command over and over—Thou shalt not; the child exclaiming, I wish no one would ever tell me to be good again! the smart youth who thinks the teachings of experience, the urgency of love, the testimony of history, the eternal ordainments of God, are nothing more than his mother's apron-strings. I 'm not a baby, he cries, that you should be at me all the time with your old-fashioned notions. Stop your preaching!

> "There is no God, the young man saith,
> Or if perchance there may be,
> He surely does not always mean
> A man should be a baby."

It is to men and women grown who think religion slow, the Bible dull, preaching a bore, and Christians a gloomy set anxious chiefly to make the rest of the world as gloomy as themselves. Virtue is monotonous. They want their fling! Well, some of them have been having their fling. Adultery, murder, suicide; tears, disgrace, death; are we not having these repeated before us with a monotony more wearisome than any precepts? What capital of Europe or America, what royal family, what aristocratic circle on either side of the ocean, but has made the world shudder? To be rich without necessity for work, taste for culture or heart for philanthropy; to be poor without a sense of the dignity of toil and the nobility of unpretentious virtue; to be in any condition without a recognition of the right of righteousness and the good of goodness, the majesty of a God present in his world and the glory of serving him—this is to be like ancient Judah, a wilful, fretting child, a silly dove dazed before the flickering fangs of the serpent coiled to strike.

And less conspicuous victims there are, who never win the blasting fame of black headlines; old women raking

over the embers of a vacant, frivolous past; old men with no excitement but the irritating effort to recall the memory of dissipation past and now impossible; those in the midst of their years which should be prosperous in honorable achievement, impoverished by redeeming pledges recklessly made by a youth of excess; youth itself, blasé, unambitious, without sense of nobility, all eager outlook on a waiting world gone—oh, is it not pitiful! The dog has had his day, and a dog's day it is, with a cur's end. The wild oats sown, and its harvest "nothing but leaves," nay, weeds and thorns and poison vines under which lurks the serpent of remorse. If virtue is indeed dull and its precepts monotonous, there is a sorer monotony of ennui, dishonor and suffering, beside which the quiet rewards of virtue are bliss. But is goodness dull? Not if we remember that on the common virtue of common lives is built up character and self-respect, the joy of households, the security of the state. Not if we remember that it is the best teaching and inheritance we can give our children, the gladdest service to mankind, the human share of God's great plan to make this world like heaven.

"The primal duties shine aloft like stars."

Two other great teachings of the chapter remain to be noted. At verse fourteen the politicians reply to Isaiah that their treaty with Assyria, or perhaps it is their secret alliance with Egypt, shall save Judah. He tells them this is but a covenant with death and agreement with hell. Genuine security is built only on faith in their God as the foundation he hath set, with judgment for the line and righteousness for the plummet. He that believeth shall not make haste, whether to run about for vain alliances, or to flee from the enemy. Their false trust shall fail them. The scourge shall overwhelm them, not once, but morning by morning, by day and by night; and they shall understand

the message with terror. The bed on which they think to rest shall yield but restlessness; under that covering they shall but shiver. For the God who put to flight their ancient enemies the Philistines before his servant David, has not lost his power among the nations.

Then at the twenty-third verse breaks in one of those messages of grace which have given Isaiah his name of the evangelical prophet. It is a parable from the field. The farmer tears the clod with plough and harrow, but only as a preparation. Then choice seeds are sown with care. When the harvest is reaped the tender grains are not crushed, but the good fruit is cleansed from husk and chaff for blessed use. So these rending judgments are but preparation for a precious harvest, when the saved among the people shall prove God's mercies and bring salvation to all the earth.

The lessons are plain: Indulgence brings destruction. Weariness of good brings weary punishment. Man's safety is to trust in God alone. God's discipline is to save the obedient. They are lessons for to-day. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Charles M. Southgate.

HEZEKIAH REOPENS THE TEMPLE

2 CHRON. 29: 18-31

"Them that honor me I will honor."—1 Sam. 2: 30.

The two books of the Chronicles were compiled long after the last king of Judah. Something like three kingless centuries had dragged by, laden with the woes of captivity, illumined by quenchless hopes, memorable for the bravery of devotion to Jerusalem.

The city lay a heap of ruins for half a century. Then the temple was rebuilt by permission of the great conqueror; many thousands came back to the city of their fathers; the walls were rebuilt, the religious practices were re-established, the ancient Scriptures were brought into use. Ezra and Nehemiah and other men of God fanned the low flame of the national spirit. But all the while there was no king save a foreign monarch.

In the midst of such a state of things, some one, probably a man attached to the temple service, prepared the books called the Chronicles. They are made up of cullings from the history of the chosen people. They are the result of a fond look backward over the long years. The central themes of these two books are the house of God and the service therein, and the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of kings or people in that bygone time to this holy establishment.

The names of Israel's early history stand in serried columns in the opening chapters, leading up to David and the names of those who were mighty men of war with him.

Then comes the story of how he brought the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem, the stronghold of Zion which his arms had taken. It is recorded that they brought it "with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, sounding aloud with psalteries and harps." Throughout his narrative the writer makes much of music.

David's exultant thanksgiving psalm, sung when the ark was safely set in the tent prepared for it, is given at length. Then follows this quaint address of his to Nathan the prophet: "Lo, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord dwelleth under curtains." After that fine touch of nature, there comes the dramatic story of how the elated, strangely-led warrior was forbidden to build a house of God, but assured that his son should be illustrious and build Jehovah's temple. After the noble prayer David uttered in submission to this check on his proud zeal, a running account is given of his victories, all centering in his abundant preparation of material and plans for the house of God which his son was to build. The first book closes with David's farewell to the people in which he charges them concerning "the house of my God for which I have prepared with all my might," and with his strangely sweet and tender prayer.

The second book opens with a detailed account of Solomon's execution of his father's plans, a full report of his sublime prayer at the dedication of the temple and a description of Solomon's royal glory. Then follow brief accounts of succeeding kings, the point of each being whether there was faithfulness or unfaithfulness to Jehovah and his temple; for this is the persistent theme of all the Chronicles.

Two kings stand out prominently toward the end of the narrative. One is Ahaz, of whom it is said: He "gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces

the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord." That three-fold repetition of the words "the house of God" is fine pathos.

After Ahaz, his son Hezekiah comes to the throne. What a change! His reign restored the house of God and roused great enthusiasm for the olden sanctities of the temple worship. This restoration is our present lesson, and the foregoing view of the two books shows how it stands for the supreme thought of the whole of the Chronicles.

First, note the man and his circumstances. Young, the son of a wicked king, he saw with his own eyes the complications of Judah, his father's kingdom, and the capture of Samaria the capital of the rival but kindred kingdom. The great Assyrian monarchy loomed like a monster over the two dissevered little kingdoms of his countrymen. In such a plight there were idolatry and heathen thoughts and customs, vice, and mutual hatred among these separated descendants of the patriarchs. What policy should he adopt? It was a grave situation, indeed.

Only by realizing how complicated and overwhelming the situation was can we appreciate the simple nobility, the profound wisdom of the course he adopted. "He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them." There is the announcement of the policy chosen. He will make fidelity to the God of the fathers the first reliance.

His royal father had forsaken Jehovah, and had shut the doors of the house of the Lord, and had made altars in every corner of Jerusalem, and in the time of his distress he had said: "Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me." The father had fallen into the delusive logic of a darkened soul. The son had watched events. He had done his own thinking. He had kept an untangled spirit. He had preserved the buoyancy of faith in the Unseen,

When the time came for him to take responsibility and act, he did not flinch. Down went the idols and pagan altars all through the royal city. Out went the king's call to priests and Levites. Come, he would lead them in a thoroughgoing return to the God of the fathers. This alone would stop the woes of his people. This call is fine reading for its literary quality. It is freighted with wisdom too. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of men are inlaid deeply in its words.

The wisdom of the young king is shown in the definite, concrete proposal. Clean out and open the holy place, God's house. Go at it. Do something. Devotion grows, faith awakes, enthusiasm glows, the spirit revives with action.

While they were doing this first thing, the wise young leader was preparing the next activity. When the venerable and magnificent temple was thrown open sixteen days later, the bullocks and rams and lambs and he-goats for the offerings, and the cymbals and psalteries and harps and trumpets and singers for the worship were all ready. Forthwith the king led the people in bravely throwing themselves into the olden customs of sacrifice and worship. It took courage to do that. It took tremendous confidence in the constancy of God. Would he indeed receive them as they came to stand amid the ancient sanctities of that temple from which they had just scraped out the rubbish and brushed down the dirt and cobwebs after years of heartless neglect? The king believed he would. So he bade the people bring their sacrifices and offerings. And the hearts of the men of Judah swelled with common courage and gladness as they saw and heard that the great old temple was thronged, and the priests were too few. Thus did Hezekiah bring his subjects back to their better selves by bringing them to the house of God.

Say what we will in these days of individualism and of

theories about social betterment and of the essential things in human welfare, the house of God still stands for this same thing—bringing men to their better selves by bringing them back to God. When there are evil conditions to be faced, when there is depression or oppression, when there is folly and wrong, when there is hardship and perplexity, whether it be for an individual or a community or a nation, there is nothing quite so good for putting men at their best and so mastering difficulties, as to lead them back to God by arousing interest and enthusiasm for the holy customs of the house of God. When, to use the psalmist's words, the feet are almost gone and the steps have well-nigh slipped, and things are too painful for a man or a set of men to think upon, now as of old a clear, sure mastery is not likely to be found "until they go into the sanctuary of God."

For most of us, in a special sense, "going into the sanctuary of God" is the same as going to God's house. Many people do not come into the divine presence definitely in any other place or manner. But more than this must be said. Allowing for the vast Godward movement of human souls alone, it remains a fact that men turn to God in a fuller, truer sense in his house. "None of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself." To draw near to God with one's fellows, to come in this way which exemplifies and impresses the related life, to realize the human relations with the divine relation, this is for the good of men in supreme degree. The benefits of other agencies for good, great as they unquestionably are, can never quite match the contributions to human welfare which come from assembling ourselves together in the house of God. Great as are the benefits of the home, the school, the library, the art gallery, the gymnasium, the park, the hospital, the philanthropic institution of whatever sort, the places of entertainment, yet the house of God

and the associated worship of God therein furnish the highest provision for the welfare of individuals and communities. How truly is the house of God the foster parent and guardian of the good done by all the others!

So there is nothing better for a community than arousing men to come together before God in his house. Doubtless now, as in Hezekiah's time, a first step to this end is that those who stand before God as his ministers should be called to sanctify themselves and given the enkindling warning: "Be not now negligent." Beyond all question it is needful now as then that there be a "carrying forth of the filthiness out of the holy place." God's church often needs clearing out that it may be filled. Now as then the people can be rallied to the house of God if men of princely voice and influence will engage themselves with the task of accomplishing this thing, so imperative in the general welfare. Here are large themes. We can now only turn them to view as sides of the solid truth that Hezekiah did a most strategic thing when he brought the people into the cleansed, open house of the Lord.

When a man centers his thought and efforts on bringing men to God, as Hezekiah did, he is very sure to put himself in a frame of mind to deal with his fellows and the problems of his day in a broad and noble spirit. How magnanimous, how brotherly was the invitation sent out by the young king! To all Judah, his own kingdom, it went, and,—now comes the proof of his sense of God and the token of his disenthralled spirit,—to all Israel also he sent it. To Israel, the estranged, hated, hateful tribes of his people; to Israel, which had set up a rival capital to Jerusalem and kings that contemned his royal fathers and his throne; to Israel, which had been waging war to crush little Judah's throne and wrest the immemorial glories of Jerusalem from her holy hills. Ah, to Israel! But before God he was equal even to sending an invitation to Israel. "From Beersheba

even to Dan," through all the tribes the call should go. And that call should be simply an invitation to return to God. He would not summon them to return to be a part of his own kingdom because he was the heir of David. His predecessors on his throne had done that. He did not hint at their being in revolt against himself. He did not propose an alliance, a *modus vivendi* by compromise or tolerance or amnesty or concession. He was not playing policy. He acted as if saying in his heart: "There is no gain in tinkering affairs; men themselves must be set right; then affairs may be handled." As F. D. Maurice has characterized this kingly act, "What he did was to claim one and all of them as children of God's covenant; as entitled to a share in the feast which declared that they were delivered from Pharaoh and brought under a divine and gracious government. All past grudges and offences were forgotten. The civil objection, that they were once in rebellion, and had become corrupted in blood by long adherence to rebellion, was cast aside. The religious objection, that the worship of calves and of Baal had cut them off from their ancient rights, that they had in effect made themselves heathens, was overcome. Even the divinely ordained formalities for the festival were not allowed to stand in the way. They had not cleansed themselves. 'They ate otherwise than it was written.' Still Hezekiah prayed, 'The good Lord pardon everyone.' It was the revelation of a fellowship with a people whom they had looked upon as enemies, to a set of men who had never known what fellowship was among themselves; yet who had a thousand tokens in their domestic relations, even in their ordinary occupations, most of all in the deep yearnings of their hearts, that they were not meant for isolation, rivalry, hostility."

Hezekiah's act is shown in its bearings in these words of Edersheim: "This brotherly invitation to the feast of

Israel's birth and the common worship of their God and Redeemer was, so to speak, the answer which repentant Judah now made to that fratricidal war which Israel had so lately waged with the object of exterminating the kingdom of David. And the letters of the king and the princes bore such tender references to past sin and judgment, and to present national calamity, and breathed such a spirit of religious hope for the future, as almost to rise to the level of New Testament sentiment."

Could there be a better precedent to be set up before nations, individuals, organizations, or classes of society, than this act of Hezekiah and his princes? Here again a vast subject opens which cannot be handled in these pages. The method of Hezekiah ought to be made a standing precedent by leaders in denominational affairs; by pastors of churches whose interests and activities impinge; by individual men and women whose claims or views rub and clash and cross; by social classes and industrial parties; by nations in the jostle of racial conflict and commercial competition and political aspiration. How often we men pray apart and contend together!

What was the immediate result of Hezekiah's high wisdom? Alas, some laughed his messengers to scorn and mocked them. But mark this: some humbled themselves and came, and there were great, glad scenes in the sacred and beloved old house of God. "And their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven."

And above all the successes that followed, Hezekiah had this for his reward, that he stood in the glow of God's favor. And this also is his, to live in the memory of men and in the influence which abides after life's perplexities have ended, not as Ahaz the bad, but as Hezekiah the good.

William Allen Knight.

CAPTIVITY OF THE TEN TRIBES

2 KINGS 17: 6-18

"The face of the Lord is upon them that do evil."—1 Pet. 3: 12.

The seventeenth chapter of the second book of Kings is a sermon. Its text is the first six verses. These are the rehearsal of the final facts in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel. We will first state these facts and then attend to the sermon.

The last king of Israel was a conspirator, a murderer, a usurper. After he had seized the throne in Samaria by slaying Pekah, the king (15: 30), his territory was invaded and he became the vassal of the king of Assyria. But he soon conspired against his master, withheld the annual tax, and sought an alliance with Egypt against Assyria. The consequences were fatal to the kingdom. The king of Israel was taken captive and confined in a fortress, the Assyrian army swept over the land, and after a siege of three years took Samaria, its capital, and Sargon, the new king of Assyria, carried the influential citizens captive to his own land, as his predecessor had done a dozen years before with the inhabitants of a number of towns in the more northern district. Sargon thus tells the story in an inscription recording his achievements:

"The city Samaria I besieged, I captured; 27,280 of its inhabitants I carried away: fifty chariots of them I took: my viceroy I placed over them: the tribute of the former king I imposed on them."

The sermon based on these facts was written by an

unknown author, whose records have come down to us through the people of Judah; and his verdict on the northern kingdom is an unqualified condemnation. But while a judge more friendly to Israel might have shown us another side of the gloomy picture, the writer of the Book of the Kings draws from these facts conclusions based on truths to which our consciences give unhesitating witness. They are truths which must be reiterated in our time, for the salvation of individuals and of the nation. The epitaph on Israel might appropriately be, "The end of those things is death." And "those things" may be simply stated. They are:

I. *Departing from the living God.*

The strength of Israel was in its vision of God and of a divine destiny. Abraham saw God. He saw the day of Christ and was glad. He went forth into the unknown land, and lived his life in the sublime confidence that he was to be a blessing to all nations. That vision and that confidence, imparted to his descendants, lifted them above the people that surrounded them, and gave a vitality to their thoughts which makes them authoritative over the greatest nations of our time.

No one can fail to be a hero who is controlled by the conviction that he is chosen to exalt his fellow men into fellowship with God. No nation with such a conviction can die. Men of inferior numbers and few possessions and narrow views have proved their supremacy because possessed by that conviction. Under its power they have gained knowledge and breadth of vision, till they have won adherents and become invincible. In that faith the Pilgrims and Puritans founded New England against the greatest odds. To what grandeur beyond their dreams their purpose has expanded!

The glory of Israel began to fade when her people divided into two kingdoms. That never could have oc-

curred if the vision of the purpose for which the nation was created had not grown dim. The people might have had civil war, as our country had forty years ago. Whole tribes might have been wiped out, but they would no more have consented to division than our fathers did, if the national ambition had not changed, if their affections had not been loosened from God and their vision of him darkened. The ten tribes broke away from the temple and the holy city because they had already begun to find the end of their ambition in themselves rather than in the will of God. That is the rock on which *souls* are wrecked—the substitution of selfish for divine ends: and around it float aimlessly the debris of many once powerful nations.

II. *Serving gods that are not God.*

Human nature demands some object of worship. The Israelites did not abandon religion when they departed from Jehovah. They made gods for themselves and attributed to their graven images the qualities which they had thought Jehovah possessed. They were never more attentive to religion than when the sun of their national day was setting. They redoubled their religious ceremonies as their inward separation from God grew more complete. They "set them up pillars and Asherim upon every high hill, and under every green tree." It was in this profusion of worship that they "wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger."

The spirit and customs of Israel in its decline are plainly contrasted with those of its earlier times of struggle and victory over the neighboring nations with which it now affiliated. The burning bush with its revelation in the desert, the plagues which smote Egypt and loosened its grasp on its slaves, the path through the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud and of fire, and the tabernacle built on the pattern revealed in the Mount, were no longer in their thoughts. Their prophets did not speak of these things

because their hearers would not have been moved by them. The aims of the people sank to the level of the aims of the nations which Jehovah had driven out before their fathers.

Faith in God makes separation from the world a necessity. Its views, its aims, its pleasures cannot be the same with those of lives devoted to him. The splendor of sacred temples and the elaborateness of religious rites may not be evidences of deepening character or growing nearness to God. The popularity of religion may lead people to deceive themselves into the belief that the world is conforming to God instead of their being conformed to the world. The generation that apologizes for the sternness and self-denial of the Puritan fathers while pointing with pride to their achievements is parting with its own power and prestige.

III. *Turning a deaf ear to the Word of God.*

The people of Israel never had had so clear statements placed before them of their sins and of the certain consequences that would follow as during these latest years before the downfall of the nation. What plainer preaching could they have had than that of Amos and Hosea, crying out to them, "Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail." "There is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God. There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery." "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding." They never had had more tender assurances of Jehovah's love, or more pleading invitations to return to him. "O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God." "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." But their interests had centered in getting gain, and in pleasures and in display. "Jehovah testified unto Israel . . . by every prophet, and every seer." Israel had no ear for prophets.

A nation whose people will not hear nor heed plain truths concerning their own moral condition cannot rely on its prosperity. The testimony of the Lord against them cannot be met by indifference nor by disparaging or ill treating his messengers. It can be met only by repentance and confession and unselfish service for men. What strength is there for the growth or defence of a nation in men whose worldly business is their chief delight or anxiety, whose interests are centered in what is beneath their feet, and who think everything visionary which is above their heads? Such a people may extend their borders, may develop their material resources with skill, may fill their storehouses and increase in goods, but they have no enduring qualities for emergencies.

Samaria was at "the head of the fat valley." From its ruins one may still look down on every side on fields whose fertility vies with any in the East and whose soil yielded great wealth to its possessors under Hoshea's reign. But what were corn and wine to put heart into men who had turned away from their God, whose prophet could describe to them the Assyrians as an approaching enemy "whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hoofs shall be accounted as flint, and their wheels as a whirlwind: their roaring shall be like a lioness, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver"? Men who can meet a foe like that must know the presence of God and welcome his word with open ears and delight in him as their greatest possession.

IV. *Giving up the covenant with God for vanity.*

The writer of this history says that Israel rejected the covenant which Jehovah made with their fathers "and followed nothingness." Their fathers had heard all the commandments and the statutes of Jehovah and then had said, "All that Jehovah hath spoken will we do, and be obedient,"

but they had renounced the commandments and given up the covenant and turned away from the witnesses who had pointed out their wrong-doing. They thought they were following wealth and pleasure and independence, but the fact remains that they exchanged God for vanity, that is, *nothingness*. This is the great final fact of Israel's history, the lesson handed down to us, often repeated in history, often reiterated by prophets and statesmen and poets "lest we forget." Bismarck said, "A people that gives up its God is like a people that gives up its territory. It is a lost people. There is only one folly greater than that of the fool that said in his heart, 'There is no God;' and that is the folly of the nation which says with its head that it doesn't know whether there is any God or not." To banish God from the counsels of government, to shut him out of the education of youth, to build homes without him, is to write concerning the people of our future the record of Israel.

When men surrender their belief in the true God they become credulous enough to believe anything. The Israelites who forsook the commandments of Jehovah their God, came to make for themselves molten calves and an Asherah and to worship all the host of heaven and to serve Baal. They came to trust in sorcery and fortune-telling, and they ran riot in the immoral and vicious practices which return again in our time under the garb of spiritualism and kindred delusions whose tendency is with high-sounding and mystical utterances to drag men down to animalism. The Israelites came to be ready to torture their own children to please the idols of their own creation. "Therefore," said the prophet, "Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight."

We shall do well to heed the lessons which the writer of this Book of the Kings draws from the saddest and the final facts in the history of Israel. Less than a hundred years before that time the nation, under Jeroboam II, was

in its greatest glory. But even then, with all its external renown it harbored the sure precursors of ruin. Contrast the splendid kingdom, extending from the source of the Orontes on the north to the valley which divided Moab from Edom on the south, with the statement in this chapter that "the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." This great change took place within a single century because the people of Israel departed from the living God and served idols, rejected his prophets and commandments and statutes, and sold themselves to work evil in the sight of Jehovah. Such sins without repentance are certain to be followed by such a fate.

Albert E. Dunning.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Isa. 9: 1-7

"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."—Isa. 9: 6.

Save a few belligerent spirits that ever relish conflict, all mankind craves peace. Whatever may be said of depravity, "universal and total" is the struggle for existence, touching every mortal, entering every realm of life. One struggles for daily bread, another for physical health: one for needed knowledge, another for spiritual strength: one to fling off a pernicious habit, another to ascend the mount of transfiguration. A man may have relief for a season, but sooner or later the storm bursts upon him, and in his struggles he longs for quiet and prays for peace.

Every organization, political, social, philanthropic, religious is battling for its life. No business enterprise can hold its own without reaching out by advertising or some kindred effort. The "strenuous life" is not optional but obligatory, if even ordinary success is sought, if the slightest gain is to be attained. Almost every individual and almost every institution feels, at times if not continually, like the man in the tank with its rising water which will engulf him if he ceases laboring at the pump. There seems to be no peace for any.

Who has not a thorn in the flesh, goading him to restlessness? Fortunate Paul if he has one alone! Most of us, in our natural deficiencies, failures, sorrows, temptations, have many tormentors, which neither plucking nor pray-

ing remove. No one of us, clothed in sackcloth and sitting in ashes, may claim the name of Job, but we feel a kinship to him closer than we desire.

Turn from personal experience to a world-wide view. Count the mighty standing armies; sum up the rapidly increasing naval expenditures; survey the strikes of the past months; peruse the murder and suicide and lynching narratives spread before us daily; dwell on the divorce statistics and their significance, until you cry out, "O Peace, where art thou?" And when you catch a glimpse of her, glowing, and gladdening struggling mortals, even as the flashing harbor light cheers the sailor still wrestling with the furious sea, will the heart break forth into Faber's hymn, inspired by the angels' song of peace:

> "Angels, sing on, your faithful watches keeping,
> Sing us sweet fragments of the songs above;
> Till morning's joys shall end the night of weeping
> And life's long shadows break in cloudless love."

Peace, the all-embracing! It means more than pardon and deliverance from punishment—escape from pain as well as punishment, from sorrow as well as sin, from distressing toil, from exhausting struggles, from famishing hunger, and restless soul hunger too. Peace! What will we lack, if we have that? To a company of men was put the question, "Would you prefer to die in the harness, working under full pressure to the end, or to have a few years of quiet, peaceful life on earth, free from stress and strain?" There was one answer from all—a bit of peace on earth each desired. We all are hungry for peace; we all, like Noah, are looking out over troubled waters, watching for a dove with an olive branch in its beak.

Let us be careful, however, lest this appetite for peace overmaster us. We must not sell our manhood birthright, to satisfy the hunger for peace, for a mess of pottage. We must not be "peace at any price" men, must not

cry out "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." One species of peace is an opiate that dulls the spiritual senses, and permits the disease to make rapid progress in concealment.

Christ declares, "My peace I give unto you." What is the peace of this temple-purifier, swinging the scourge; of this denouncer of the Pharisees, crying "Woe unto you;" of this rebuker of his own disciples? What is the peace of this visitor to Gethsemane, this occupant of the cross? His peace! From the battle with the devil in the wilderness to the battle with death in the great city, his life was a conflict. "The Son of God goes forth to war." He gives a sword, declares himself a divider of families, undermines kingdoms, shakes society to its foundations, and sweeps away countless practices and preachments. Peace! What is the peace of the Prince of peace? It is not the calm of the desert, nor the tranquillity of the stagnant pool, nor the quiet of the ocean depths, nor the repose of death. Christ's peace has no kinship to Nirvana.

It is not carnal sluggishness, nor phiegmatic repose, nor spiritual indifference; it is rather the balance of an ardent soul when confusion and strife prevail—the soaring of a bird in the storm-riven sky, the darting of a fish through the surging billows, the nodding of a flower on the storm-swept hill-crest. Christ stilled the sea, but at the same time rebuked his disciples for their lack of faith. When the tempest ceased, they had wonder, but not peace; that could have come only from a serene faith amid the raging billows. The climax of the revelation of that peace which the world cannot give and the world cannot take away, is found in the words on the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Christ's peace is not of surroundings, but of soul; subjective rather than objective; not a creation of circumstances, but a child of faith in the invisible God.

How shall we win the peace of the sword-bringing Prince of peace, the peace of the suffering Lamb of God, the peace of the Lion of the tribe of Judah?

When participating in a conflict, peace may be obtained in one of three ways: (1) by submission to the foe: (2) by conquering the foe: (3) by fraternizing with him. Christ's peace is secured by a union of these three methods—by surrender, by mastery, by comradeship.

I. *By submission to God.*

There can be no abiding peace without unconditional surrender to him. As well pitch your tent on the flats of the Bay of Fundy at low tide, or lay the foundations for your home on the crater's edge, in anticipation of peace, as to ignore or challenge God the irresistible. Accord with the operations of his forces, material and moral, is the first element of peace. "It is hard," said Christ in the vision to Saul of Tarsus, "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;" and that has been true of all time and with all men who resist God. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But if God be against us the soul can make no headway toward tranquillity. The godless may have pleasure, prosperity, power, but not abiding peace of heart. Conscience will prevent that, and if conscience be silenced, the very stones will cry out against us. The radiant flush of the dance, the self-forgetful thrill of the theater, the absorbing passion of business, the joy in ecclesiastical success are but a veneer of peace, and whether it is peace clear through to the heart, or not, depends on our harmony with God.

Let us not misunderstand Gethsemane, the creator not of the crucifixion but of the accompanying peace. "Not my will, but thine, be done," did not so much bring death, but peace in death. The logical sequence of submission to the divine will is not an increase of suffering, but a serene and triumphant temper in the suffering certain to

come. "As thou wilt" is not baring the back to the scourge, but accepting the healing balm for the quivering soul; is not a surrender to pain, but an invitation to peace. The only true peace is peace from God through peace with God.

II. *By mastery over evil.*

Surrender to God cannot alone bring perfect peace. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. The weakling who yields to the Creator, and then gives up to Satan, is not standing upon a rock, but is between the upper and nether millstone. Gethsemane brought serenity of spirit, because the wilderness of temptation and triumph had preceded it. Christ could bow in the garden with the cross in sight; he would not bow in the wilderness though a kingdom was held before him. When evil appears, stalking like Goliath in haughty defiance of the armies of the Lord, unsheathe the sword—it is better than a plowshare; hurl the spear forged out of a pruning-hook; now for the sling and the smooth stones.

The surgeon's knife cuts, that there may be healing; the plowshare tears the sod, that there may be a harvest; the rain clouds conceal the sun for a season, that his rays may bring life and not death to the plants. So, put on the whole armor of God, and let strife rage, that peace may prevail at last. For years our forefathers sought peace by petitions to the mother country; for half a century the North and South sought peace by compromise, but at last each discovered that the only path to the promised land of peace lay through the valley of the shadow of death. A corrupt city is quiet, but there is no abiding peace for it until it has been shaken to its foundations by the conquering assaults of reformers. We all deprecate the labor conflicts that threaten our prosperity, yet it may be that permanent industrial justice and content can come only by such battling. Nothing is settled until it is settled right, and that often must be by warfare.

The peace of Christ can come only as we are able and willing to smite sin in our hearts, our homes, our nation, and in the world. We must dethrone evil, crush sin, sweep away corruption, and fling over the battlements of the soul every assaulting temptation. By mastery, in a conflict often long and fierce, must peace be sought.

III. *By comradeship with our fellows.*

We are emphasizing in these days the brotherhood of man, which is no new conception we are creating,—simply becoming attentive to the angels' song of good will among men, turning the light more brightly on the second great commandment of Christ. It always has been used in making the rough places plain in the way of peace. Some great souls have erred here. Submissive to God, resolute against evil, they fell short in good will to their peers, their associates. They must either be conquered or conquerors. They knew not compromise in details, kindliness in differences of opinion, cooperation in the conduct of affairs, leniency in judgment. They fought heroically against temptation in the wilderness, they never refused to enter Gethsemane, but they did not tarry long enough in the upper chamber, where, at the sacramental supper, by act as well as by word, they were urged by their Master to humble cooperation and a unity that was divine. Here they might have learned that the essence of the triune relationship is comradeship. The sandals of peace, referred to by Paul, in the description of the Christian armor, can always be identified, for on them is woven a pair of clasped hands. Good will to men, kindliness to all, should bubble up in the heart of the peace-craving life like that finest and sweetest spring in the Pauline realm, the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Perfect peace must come by bringing peace to others. To give is to have. True and

pure camaraderie is one of the supports of the tripod that sustains peace.

By these three can we secure the peace of the Prince of peace, which is a gift, not like the rain which we receive without our cooperation, but like the pearl for which we must dive, the gold for which we must dig, the harvest for which we must toil, and which are the gifts of God as truly as the rain for which we make no effort. Peace is a gift to be won, and all may win it.

Edwin H. Byington.